

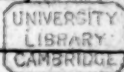
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Souls Looking-Glasse,
lively representing its
Estate before
GOD:

With a Treatise of
CONSCIENCE;

Wherein the definitions and distinctions thereof are unfolded,
A and severall Cases H
resolved:

By that reverend and faithfull Minister of the Word,
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in Essex.



ACTS 24. 16.

*I exercise my self to have alwayes a conscience void of
offense toward God and toward men.*

CAMBRIDGE.

Printed by Roger Daniel, Printer to the
Universitie;

For John Rothwell at the Sunne in Pauls
church-yard. 1643.

13-162



To the Christian Reader.

IT was the saying of Solon, That there were many good laws made, but there wanted one law to make us put all those laws in execution : The like may be said *Ille vero* concerning the books that are writ- *Scripturas* ten now adayes, There are many *legit qui* good books written, but there want- *verba ver-* eth one book to make us to put *tit in ope-* those good books in practice. Such *ra.* a book were worth writing, and worth reading. And I know no reason but that this book (if the Spirit of God write it in our hearts) may have this happie effect : For it is a book that will teach us how to get into the State of grace, and how to get and keep a good Conscience. And whosoever readeth a book

* ΕΝ ΝΟ-
καισύνῃ
συλλήβδην
πᾶς ἀρετῆς.
* ἀπὸ τῶ
πάντα ἀ-
κείν, ἡ sa-
nandis om-
nibus mor-
bis.
* περιχρὸν
φάρμακον.

with a good conscience will make conscience to practice what he readeth : For a good conscience is, as Aristotle saith of Justice, * a Synopsis and Epitome of all virtues : It is a * Panacea to cure all soul-diseases : It is * a medicine to digest all book-surfetting.

There are foure sorts of Consciences : Some bad and unquiet, some bad and quiet, some good and unquiet, some good and quiet. For a conscience to be bad and quiet is the worst temper that can be : Better have a bad unquiet then a bad and quiet conscience : better have a tormenting Tophet in the soul then a fools Paradise : The best frame of Conscience is the good and quiet conscience : This is a * Paradise upon earth, * a preguustation and prelibation of heaven, * a mansion for

* Letitia
bonae con-
scientiae
paradisus
est animae

rum, gaudium angelorum hortus deliciarum, ager benedictionis, templum Solomonis, aula Dei, habitaculum Spiritus sancti, Bernard.

* προπαισμις ἐστίν.

To the Reader.

the Trinitie to dwell in. Now this
ensuing treatise will teach us how
to purchase this precious jewel of
a good and quiet conscience. A trea-
tise very necessary in these uncon-
scionable dayes, wherein most peo-
ple make no conscience to sinne a-
gainst conscience; and some have
sinned so long against conscience
as that they have lost all conscience
of sinne. As * S. Augustine saith of
the name of a Christian, so may I
say of conscience, *Multi conscientiam*
habent, non ad remedium sed ad iudicium,
Many have a conscience for their
condemnation and not for their sal-
vation. Conscience * it is the house
of the soul: But this house lieth
waste and is much ruined and de-
cayed in these times, wherein * ne-
ver more science but never lesse
conscience. Conscience * it is a private
dicere consuevi plus illos conscientia, scientia minus habuisse; nos
contra, scientia plus, conscientia minus habere, Beza. * *Prejudi-*
cium iudicii, Tertull.

* *Multi*
Christia-
num nomen
ad iudici-
um habent
non ad re-
medium.

Domus
anime,
Guil. Pa-
rificens.

* *Dum*
tempora
superiora
cum nostris
comparo,

* *Prejudi-*

The Epistle

judgement-day before the publick day of judgement : And it is an ill presage that most people will never stand upright in the court of heaven, because they stand accused and condemned in the court of conscience. Conscience is Gods preacher in our bosomes : And it is a most certain rule ; That that man that will not regard the preacher in his bosome will never regard the preacher in the pulpit. And the reason why the preacher in the pulpit doth no more good, is because the preacher in the bosome is so much despised and neglected. And therefore I doubt not but this book (these motives considered) will be very acceptable to all those that have or desire to have a good and quiet conscience. For as * S. Bernard most excellently saith, *Every mans conscience is his book ; and all books are written to discover and amend the errors of the book*

** unicuique
liber est
propria
conscien-
tia ; & ad
hunc li-
brum dis-
cutiendum
& emen-
dandum
omnes alii
inveni-
unt.*

of

to the reader.

of conscience. Let those that reade this book of conscience look into the book of their own conscience, and amend all the faults of that book by this.

The reverend Authour of this book was a Minister very conscientious, and one that had a great abilitie given him by God to preach unto and work upon the consciences of people, to awaken the sleepe conscience, to inform the erroneous conscience, to settle the doubtfull conscience, and to comfort the wounded conscience: his sermons were all dipt in conscience: And therefore a subject of Conscience must needs be welcome from such a preacher. It is true that this birth is *Posthumum opus*, and cometh out after the death of the Authour: But I hope it will be the more pleasing, to revive the memory of him whose life and labours were deservedly precious in the esteem of Gods

The Epistle

people. And if conscience, though for a while blind, & dumbe, and seared, & put out of all office, will notwithstanding at last be put into office, and made to see, speak and feel, to the utter destruction of an impenitent sinner; why may not a discourse of Conscience, though long ago preached, be suffered to revive and live for the salvation of those that shall have grace to reade it aright? especially considering that these sermons were perfected by himself in his life time?

Prelucendo pereo.

Much I could say in commendation of this worthie Divine, both in regard of his unwearisome pains in preaching, consuming his own bodie to save the souls of others, as also of his learning and exemplarie pietie: but I forbear. All that I will say is this; They that fully knew him did love and reverence him: and if any did disesteem him, it was because they did not fully know him.

He

He is now a shining starre in the firmament of heaven. And there are hundreds of people that will blesse God to all eternity for his pains. He needeth not our praises, but our imitation.

All that I desire from you that reade this short treatise is this! That ye would either get a good conscience by the reading of this book, or bring a good conscience to the reading of it. Labour to make an addition to the heavenly joyes of this faithfull servant of God by making this book a means to bring thy soul to those heavenly joyes which are at Gods right hand for evermore: which are joyes unspeakable and glorious, so great that, as S. Augustine saith, *If one drop of the joyes of heaven should fall into hell, it would swallow up all the bitternesse of Hell.* And that God would make you heirs of this joy, is the prayer of your soul-friend

**Tanta est dulcedo
caelestis
gaudii, ut
si una gut-
tula dis-
fluere in
infernum,
totam a-
maritudi-
nem infer-
ni absorbo-
ret.*

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An Enquiry after a mans Estate before God.

COLOSS. 4. 8.

Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he may know your estate and comfort your hearts.

THE estate of a man before God is the relation that he standeth in unto God, as God is the free fountain of all spirituall life and salvation, and the determiner of mens everlasting conditions either in heaven or in hell: So that when we question about a mans estate, we question, Whether he be in Christ or not; Whether he have true grace yea, or no; Whether he be one of Gods children or no, or whether he be yet no better then a reprobate.

What a
mans estate
before God
is.

There be three things to be considered in this definition of every mans estate. First, it is a *relation unto God*; not as a man is in himself, it may be rich, it may be poore in the world; but I speak here as he is in relation towards God, Whether he be rich towards God, yea or no. I do not speak as a man is in regard of others; it may be he is a father or a sonne, a master or a servant, a king or a subject: but in relation to God, Whether Gods servant or no, Gods child or no. *Salute Apelles*, saith Paul; and he tell-

Rom. 16. 1

B

eth

eth us in what estate Apelles was in before God, namely, in an estate of approbation, *approved in Christ*. And the same Apostle speaketh on the contrary of the unconverted Gentiles, that they *Ephes. 4.18*, were *strangers from the life of God*, Ephes. 4, 18. Secondly, As it is a relation unto God, so it is a *standing* relation: That wherein he standeth towards God, that is a mans estate before God. There is a difference between one that doth sin and one that is in the state of sinne: A child of God may sinne, but he is not in a state of sinne; you cannot call him a wicked man. So also there is difference between one that doeth some good actions and one that is in a good estate: A carnall man may do some good things, but he is not in a good estate. The estate of a man is a standing thing, it is the relation that he standeth in towards God. Thirdly, It is the relation that a man standeth in towards God *as he is the free fountain of spirituall life and salvation*. It is not every standing relation towards God: For a man may be considered in relation to God as a Creatour, and so the heavens and the earth and the very brute beasts stand in relation to God as they are his creatures; but they have not this estate that we speak of, which is a relation to God as the free giver of spirituall life and salvation (He is free, he may choose whether he will give it or no.) Now this is a mans estate, the relation he standeth in unto God, Whether the Lord hath given him his saving grace, yea or no; spirituall life in Christ Jesus, yea or no; title to heaven and salvation, yea or no? this is the meaning when we speak of a
mans

mans estate. It is said of Sodom, *They were sinners before God*: that is they were in a bad estate, a state of sinne. It is said of Zachary and Elisabeth, *They were both righteous before God*; that is, they were both in a very good state. Gen. 13. 13. Luke 1. 6.

All Christians believe that there is a God: It behoveth every one now to consider in what estate he standeth to his God. This is a great question that we which are ministersought to demand of our people, to know their estates. *Observ.*
Ministers are to enquire after the estate of their people.

First, because we are shepherds, and are bound to look well how it standeth with our flock. If we do not labour to know your estates, we can never look well to your souls. Consider that place in the Proverbs, *Be diligent to know the state of thy flock, and look well to thy herds.* *Reasons.*
1.
Prov. 27. 23. Where the wise man first requireth that we should look well to our flocks, and then directeth us in the manner how, viz. by being diligent to know their estate how it standeth with them.

Secondly, we are Gods labourers; and we must know in what estate our work standeth: else we may labour and labour and all in vain; we may preach and exhort and call upon our people to heare and believe, and obey; and all this may still be in vain, if we do not enquire in what estate they are. This is the reason why Paul could not forbear sending and enquiring how it stood with the Thessalonians, in what estate they were in, how it went with their faith, whether they kept it or no, lest the tempter had tempted them, and his labour should have been 1. Thess. 3. 5.

in vain ; for so it had been for all his preaching and teaching them if they had not been in a good estate : therefore he sent to know.

3. Thirdly, we are to take the care and the charge of your souls : Now then how can we be quiet if we do not know in what estate your souls be ? A good father cannot be at quiet if he do not know how it is with his children : How if they should be sick ? how if undone ? Oh it would comfort a good father to know his children to be in good case : But if it were otherwise with them, though it would grieve him much yet he had rather know it then not ; for if he know it he can better tell what to do. So it was with the Apostle ; his very bowells yerned upon the Philippians, *Oh my poore people, thought he, I wonder what estate they be in. How if they totter ? how if they miscarry ? how if the devil have tempted them to sinne and to apostatize ? how if they be in trouble of conscience ?* He could never be at quiet till he knew their estate : *I trust in the Lord Jesus, saith he, to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your estate.* He had a great care of their souls, and therefore it would comfort his heart to know what estate they were in.

Fourthly, we are teachers, and therefore we must know the estate of our people : otherwise we are ignorant what doctrine to provide for them, what points to handle among them. Paul in this epistle to the Colossians, knowing onely their estate in the generall, delivereth abundance of generall precepts and exhortations unto them:

he

he describeth unto them the mystery of Christ, admonisheth them to continue stedfast therein, to embrace the preaching of the word, to beware of philosophy and the vain traditions and sophistry of men, to take heed of doting upon ceremonies, which are all ended in Christ, to set their affections on heaven, to mortifie the deeds of the flesh, to put off the old man; he warneth them to be loving and humble: he biddeth wives do their duties to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives; children to obey their parents, and parents to encourage their children; servants to obey their masters, and masters to deal well with their servants; all to continue in prayer, watchfulnesse, thanksgiving; to walk wisely towards them that are without, to be carefull of godly & holy communication: Thus knowing their estate onely for the generall he teacheth them in generall, and therefore now he concludeth, as if he should say, *I speak somewhat generally because I do not* Col. 4. 8. *know your estates in particular; and therefore I send to you Tychicus, a faithfull good minister, that he may learn your estates in particular, and deal with you answerably. It may be some of you want corrosives; it may be some of you want cordials; it may be some have need to be searched and humbled, some of you to be encouraged and comforted: I have sent him to enquire into your estates in particular, that he may do accordingly. Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he may know your estate and comfort your hearts.*

The use of this is threefold.

Uses. 1. First, for instruction. Hence we may see that *Instruct.* a minister doeth but his duty when he enquireth into mens estates how they stand before God: It is not prying into other mens matters; it is not busi-bodinesse in other mens affairs; it is not a spirit of meddling: No, a minister doeth but his duty when he doeth it. How can a Physician apply true and proper physick unlesse he *Job. 8. 12.* enquire into the state of mens bodies? Now a minister is a physician to mens souls; and therefore he is to enquire of the state of mens souls how they stand before God. They are men of Belial that say, *What? must the minister know all? and, Can there be nothing done but the minister must heare of it?* These are very evil speeches. The minister doeth but his duty when he is inquisitive.

2. Re-proof. The second use may be for reproof. If it be the duty of a minister to enquire of mens estates before God, then those people are too blame that will not make known their estates. What is the reason that so many men abide in a rotten estate, but because they are loth to open truly and fully what they are to Gods ministers? Nay many are like them in the prophet, *who say to the seers, See not.* They would not have Gods ministers see what they do, nor see what they are. I confesse there be some that will open something about their estates, but not all they know by themselves: They keep in the main; like some foolish clients who misinform their Counsel, making their case better then indeed it is, and so their cause miscarrieth: So some keep in that which would give most light to judge of their

their estates : But this ought not so to be. I can tell you an example of one that being troubled about his estate before God, and some ministers being by, *Oh, saith he, I will tell you all that I know of my self; I'll not hide a syllable from you: and if I be yet no better then a wretch, I beseech you tell me plainly that I am so; and if I be in Christ, I beseech you prove it plainly unto me.* This man took a right course, and thereby through Gods mercy came in a little space to the assurance of his own blessed estate and condition.

Thirdly, for exhortation. Let Gods ministers *3. Exhort* know of your estates, that they may be able to *hortati-* speak to you accordingly. By this means they *on.* may speak words in due season, and like wise house-holders give every one his portion. If you had but a cut finger, would not you be glad to have the right plaistre? and if you had a burning fever, would you not desire the right remedy? how much more in curing the sicknesse of the soul?

Now from the text it self without any cutting up of the words we may gather foure propositions :

1. That there is an estate that every man is in, either an estate of grace or an estate of sinne.
2. That this state may be known.
3. That every man should be willing to have his estate examined, that it may be known whether it be good or no.
4. That a man can never have true comfort till it be known that he is in a good estate.

1. For the first, That there is an estate that *1. Ob-*

every one is in, either of grace or sin ; See this
Act. 8. 23. in Simon Magus: *I perceive*, saith S. Peter, *thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.* See, he telleth him what estate he was in, *viz.* a very bad estate, in a desperate and damnable condition. In this state of sin and misery are all they that are not renewed by Christ Jesus. And for the other see an example, *Rom. 16. 7.* *Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord :* The text there telleth us what estate he was in, a very good estate ; He was a man in Christ, *a choise man*, that is, a man in the state of grace and salvation. In this estate are all they that are called and sanctified and made new creatures unto God. Every man is in one of the two estates : there is no middle estate which is neither the one nor the other, but in one of these two are all the whole world. The reason is,

1. From everlasting the world was divided onely into two ranks, either Elect or Reprobates.

2. Here in this life the world is divided onely into two companies, either Godly or Ungodly.

Matth. 25.
 32 3. At the day of judgement the Lord will divide the whole world onely into two sorts, either Sheep or Goats.

2. *Prop.* II. For the second proposition, This estate Election may be known. may be known. This estate may be known : Especially every man may come to the knowledge of his own estate before God. I do not say that every man may know whether he be elect or reprobate : yet this I say too, That a godly soul may know that it is elected to life. The Apostle exhorteth all that are
 godly

godly to give diligence to make their election sure, 2. Pet. 1. 10. He that attaineth to that faith which the Apostle calleth *the faith of Gods elect*, Titus 1. 1. and receiveth the word of God, as Paul saith the Thessalonians did, and thence coucludeth they were chosen of God, 1. Theff. 1. 4, 5. he may attaine to much assurance of his election. But though a godly man may know he is elected of God, yet for reprobation the case is not alike : 1. Because ungodlinesse is not alwayes joyned with perseverance. 2. Besides, God hath many reasons why he doth not reveal mens reprobation unto them : They would then be outrageous in evil, desperate in wickednesse; there could be no order or government in humane life : Besides that, the form of Christs administration of his kingdome could not be so as it now is : for Christ hath bid his ministers preach the Gospel to every creature, to whole parishes and towns, and except none: Christ will not tell his ministers which be reprobates and which not, that they may preach unto all, and labour to work upon every soul; and there is none in a parish but the minister must look upon him as one who may be saved: Christ will not tell his people which be reprobates, that they may look upon every one as one that may be wonne to the faith for any thing they know : Christ will not tell the reprobates themselves that they are reprobates, that every one of them may come to the use of the means ; How do they know but they may find grace ? yea and the Lord doth seriously call them ; and it is their fault if they obey not. It

Shrewd
signes of it.

is Gods infinite mercy, that election, which is such a comfortable point, may be revealed to Gods children; and that reprobation, which is so intolerable and bitter, is not revealed to the reprobate. Neverthelesse let me adde, That some particular men have known their own reprobation, as Cain and Judas, &c. And there be shrewd signes of it: (I do not speak it as though I meant to perswade any man that he is one, but onely that he may take heed of them.)

1. Malicing the known truth is a very shrewd signe: As, when men know that godlinesse is pleasing to God, and yet they hate a man for it; when men know the minister is commanded to rebuke sinne, and yet they will spite him for so doing: this is a very shrewd signe. Paul persecuted the truth; *but yet*, saith he, *I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly*, 1. Tim. 1. 13. intimating that if he had done it against knowledge he had been in danger to have found no mercy. And therefore ye that mock and hate those wayes which God hath commanded, I beseech you, take heed lest ye sin unpardonably.

2. Absolute apostasie is a shrewd signe too of reprobation: When men have been very forward in the profession of the truth, and fall totally away and prove miserably profane, as the Apostle, sheweth, Heb. 6. 6.

3. Finall impenitency. This is an infallible signe of reprobation, when a man liveth in sin, dieth in sin, & goeth away without repentance. *Luke 13. 3. Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* There be many of us have stood out
long

long in impenitency ; let us take heed lest if we stay any longer we fall upon this great evil.

I return to the point : A man may come to the knowledge of his own estate before God. I do not mean, Whether he be in the state of election or reprobation : but he may know, Whether he be in the state of salvation or damnation, that is, Whether he be in the way that leadeth to heaven or hell, Whether he be in such a case that if he die now he shall be saved or not saved : Every man may thus know in what estate he is ;

That a man may know his estate, proved.

Because the word of God sheweth a man this: *Reasons*
As for example, *He that committeth sinne is of the devil.* Mark ; the Apostle telleth us what estate that man is in that liveth in sinne, in a very bad estate. So on the contrary ; *He that hath this hope purgeth himself.* Mark ; the Apostle telleth us what estate that man is in who purgeth himself ; he is in a very good estate, in a state of true hope in Christ. And so 1. Cor. 6. 10. the Apostle nameth divers who are not in the state of salvation but of damnation : if they die in such case they cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. So that if a man will but search the word, and believe that God doth say true, he may know his estate.

I. 1. John 3. 8.

1. John 3. 3.

2. Without this knowledge a man cannot have an accusing or an excusing conscience in respect of his estate : but men may have, yea many men have, a conscience accusing them of being in a very bad estate ; and many men have an excusing conscience that plainly doth witness that they are in a very good and gracious estate.

II.

Exod. 9.
27.

I and my people are wicked, saith Pharaoh. His conscience did accuse him of being in a bad estate.

Psal. 86. 2.

I am holy, saith David; *I am thy servant*. His conscience told him he was in the state of grace. So that ye need not go farre to know what estate you are in: there is that in your bosome that can decide the matter.

III.

Matth. 3.
7, 8.

3. Men cannot desire nor flie fr o an unknown estate: But men are commanded to flie from a bad estate, and seek out a good one: Therefore they may know the one and the other. *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flie from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*, saith John to the Pharisees. He supposeth these men might easily know that they were in a very bad estate, or else how could he say thus unto them?

Before I come to the Uses let us consider these three things:

Eph. 2. 3.

1. That every man living is born in a very bad estate. We all know it well; but oh that we would consider it *We are all by nature children of wrath*. Now here lieth the question, When did we change our estates? We are in the same state of damnation wherein we were born except we are come out of it. I say, here lieth the question, Whether we are come out of it or no, whether we have mended our estate.

2. Consider that the greatest part of the world never mend their estates: But as they were born in a cursed estate, so they live and die in it. And I speak not this of heathen onely; but alas! how many in the visible church do so? How many were there in the church of Philippi whom the
Apostle

Apostle could not think of without weeping *Phil. 3. 17.* when he considered in what estate they were. So in the church of Corinth, not many wise, not *1. Cor. 1. 26.* many rich, not many noble called; but commonly the meanest in the eye of the world were in the best estate towards God. Nay more then so; Many of them who seek to get into a good estate misse of it and perish. See, *Luke 13. 24.* *Strive to enter in at the strait gate:* Mark; it's a strait gate, and letteth but few in: *for many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.* Here and there a few even where the constant ministry is.

3. Consider that it is a marvellous hard thing to passe from state unto state, from a bad to a good estate. There is a very vast gulf between the state of sinne and the state of grace, and it is marvellous hard to passe it. These things premised, the Uses follow.

1. This point may be many wayes usefull: *Use 1.* First, for instruction. If God hath made it possible unto us to find out what estate every one of us is in, then sure he would have us go about it and enquire after it. God might have left us to perish in our naturall blindness, never to have known in what case we had been untill we were past recovery. First, we are all wanderers from God and from the wayes of peace, and therefore God might justly have suffered us for ever to have wandred, and never to have been able to find out whether we had been right or wrong. Secondly, God hath dealt so with some: He hath suffered some to go on all their dayes blindfold to hell. Thus the Lord dealt with the scribes and

Of Instruction.
It is every mans duty to enquire after his estate.

Matth. 15.
14.

and Pharisees ; *Let them alone*, saith he , *they be blind leaders of the blind : and if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.* Ye see the Lord hath dealt so with some ; and it is his mercy he hath not dealt so with us. Sith God hath made it possible for us to know, it is our duty to enquire after it : And that yet further for these reasons :

Reasons 1. First, because the Lord commandeth it :

2. Cor. 13. 5. Examine your own selves whether ye be in the faith; prove your selves : know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ? Where ye see the Apostle commandeth the duty of self-triall : And consider how he presseth it upon us : 1. *Do ye not know what estate you are in ? then examine and enquire.* 2 *Do ye think ye are in a good estate ? look ye prove it, and be sure ye be not in an error.* *Do ye object ye do not know, neither can ye know ? No ? then your estate is very bad: find out some good tokens in you, except ye be reprobates.* This command makes it a clear duty.

Rom, 5. 1.

2. But a second reason to prove it our duty to enquire what estate we are in, is, because without the knowledge thereof we can never have any true peace in our consciences : The conscience must needs be without peace so long as we are ignorant of what estate we are in : *Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* First the Apostle sheweth their estate ; they were in a state of *justification* : and from the knowledge thereof they had *peace*. We are bound to get true peace to our consciences ; Oh, what a lamentable

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maze are vve in till our consciences have peace!
and this they cannot have untill vve are fully
acquainted in vvhath case vve stand before God: *Joh. 12. 21.*
Acquaint thy self with God, and be at peace.

3. Thirdly, vve can never be fit for any duty
of Gods vvorship as long as vve know not
vvhat estate vve are in : We can never be fit for
any holy duty, to heare, pray, receive the sacra-
ment : *Let a man examine himself, and so let* *1. Cor. 11. 28.*
him eat, &c. First he must examine in vvhat
estate he is before he can be fit for that high ser-
vice. So for repentance : *Let us search and try* *Lam. 3. 40.*
our wayes, and turn again to the Lord : first
find our selves in an ill estate, and then return.
So for joy ; It is a duty to rejoyce in the Lord:
But vve are never fit for rejoycing till vve have
proved vvhat estate vve are in : *Let every man* *Gal. 6. 4.*
prove his own work ; so shall he have rejoycing.
We can never be fit for any duty untill vve
know in vvhat estate vve are in, because every
duty varieth according as the estate of every
man is. To instance in prayer ; He that is not
in the state of grace must pray one vvay, and he
that is in the state of salvation must pray ano-
ther vvay : the one that he may be converted
and brought home to God ; the other, that he
may be strengthened and encreased in grace.
And so for the duty of hearing, &c.

The second use is for direction ; to let us un-
derstand by vvhat means vve may know vvhat
estate vve are in. There be foure means to know
this.

1. By our outward and inward actions. I do
not say, by our outward actions : For a man
may

Use. 2.
Of Di-
rection.

Means to
know what
estate we
are in.

may be in the state of hypocrisie, and yet his outward actions may be good. Neither do I say by our inward actions alone: For a man may be in the state of self-deceit, and yet say his heart is good and his meaning and mind good. But I say, by them both put together. Our Saviour setteth it out by a tree; *Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit.* So if the heart bringeth forth the fruit of righteousness, joy in good things, patience, meekness, gentleness, love, obedience, godly conversation, &c. these evidence a good estate: but if the heart bringeth forth deadness, earthliness, impatience, evil conversation, &c, these are corrupt fruits and signes of a very bad estate.

Math. 7. 17.

Psal. 119.
112.

2. Ye may know what estates ye are in by your inclinations and dispositions, from whence these actions proceed. Are your hearts inclined heavenward and God-ward, as Davids? are ye bent to holiness and self-deniall, &c. as a bow is bent to shoot the arrow? This is a signe of a good estate: as 1. Chron. 22. 19. there is speech of *setting the heart to seek God*. Ye know when a man will do a thing indeed, we say *he is set on't*. It may be ye do some good duties, make some fair offers of seeking God; but are your hearts set on't? or are they set on the world and inclined earth-ward? The inclinations of every creature in the world do ever shew what the creature is. How do we know that a stone is heavy? Because it inclineth downward. How do we know a man is cholerick? Because he is inclined unto wrath. So a mans estate may be known

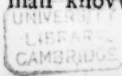
known by his constant inclination either to good or evil.

3. One may know vvhhat estate he is in by that reflexive act which is proper onely to man. There is an act in mans soul (we call it a *reflex* act) vvhich no creature hath but onely man, vvhereby he can perceive vvhhat himself is and doeth. When a man thinketh or speaketh, he can reflect upon himself, and perceive vvhhat he thinketh or speaketh : vvhen he prayeth, he can reflect upon his ovvn heart, and perceive hovv it carrieth it self all along in his prayers. I say, no creature in the vvorld hath in it this reflexive act but onely man. The fire burneth, but it cannot reflect upon its ovvn burning: *Oculus non videt se videre*, The eye seeth, but it doth not see that it doth see; that is, That creature doth not perceive vvhhat it doeth vvhen it seeth. But every man hath this reflexive act in him, vvhereby he is privie to vvhhat himself thinketh, doeth, is. *None knoweth the things of a man,* 1. Cor. 2. 11. *save the spirit of a man that is in him.* This is the reason vvhy some know not vvhhat estate they are in, because they choke their ovvn spirit and hoodwink their consciences. Thine ovvn heart knowveth hovv it is vvith thee, and vvould faithfully tell thee if thou vvouldst enquire of it and hearken unto it. Search vvith Gods candle, and thou mayst easily find vvhhat is in thee. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord.* search- Prov. 20. 27. *ing all the inward parts of the belly.*

4. Ye may know vvhhat estate ye are in by a certain kind of feeling. As there is a kind of bodily feeling vvhereby every man knowveth the

estate

C



Luke 24. 32.

Eph. 4. 19.

estate of his body whether he be sick or in health, so there is a spirituall feeling. The two disciples did feel their hearts burn : Paul did feel a great combat in him betveen the flesh and the spirit: So if men be covetous and vworldly, they may feel it. Yet indeed some men be past feeling: Their case is the vvorse because they cannot feel hovv bad it is : But for the most, they may easily feel what their estate is.

Use 3.
Impedi-
ments.

The third use is, to shew you the impediments that hinder this knowvledge. If you vvould attein to knowv vvhat estate you are in, then remove the impediments ; vvhich are

Jer. 4. 14.

1. Vain thoughts. Men vvho are in a state of sinne and vvrrath, yet have many vain thoughts lodging within them keeping them from knowing it : *God is mercifull* ; and *Christ died for sinners* ; and, *There be worse sinners then they* ; why should they think so ill of themselves ? and, *they may be better all in good time* : These vain thoughts hoodvvink their eyes that they cannot see their estate, nor resolve that it is so dangerous as indeed it is. *O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickednesse : how long shall these vain thoughts lodge within thee ?* They were in a very bad estate; and yet they had such vain thoughts that they could not see it.

Rev. 3. 17.

2. Presumption is another impediment. Men pray, and heare, and do other good duties, and so take all to be well without serious examining. This was the case of the Laodicean people : They thought they had that in them which they had not, and that their estate was good, when it was nothing so.

3. Another

3 Another let are the Cares of this life: Where-
by the heart is so occupied that it doth not find
time to search its own estate. Therefore our Sa-
viour saith, *Take heed that your hearts be not* Luke 21. 34
overcharged with the cares of this life, lest that
day come upon you unawares; intimating that
these cares are great lets from considering our
estates.

4. Another let is an Evil conscience, which
affrighteth a man so soon as he beginneth to
stirre, and maketh him afraid to go on to look
soundly into his estate. *He that doeth evil ha-* John 3. 20.
teth the light.

5. Another let is Ignorance. *There is none* Rom. 3. 11.
that understandeth, none that seeketh after God.
Mark; they did not seek in what case they stood
before God because they did not understand.

6. Another let is Spirituall sloth and slug-
gishnesse of heart. Men cannot endure to take
pains with their own hearts till they have made
out a true judgement in what case they are; They
begin and quickly give over; and so for want of
diligence and pains-taking make nothing sure.

The last use is for exhortation; That all men Use 4.
would bestirre themselves and set in earnest upon Of Ex-
this enquire, That we may every one know hortati-
in what state we stand. on.

1. Consider, this is an enquiry about our
souls. We enquire about our outward man,
about the estate of our bodies, and vworldly
affairs, &c. oh, let us not neglect this main en-
quiry, *Am I in Christ, yea or no? Am I a new*
creature, yea or no? Doth my soul live to God
or no?

2. Consider, this is a question about our everlasting estate. We can never have comfort untill we have put this out of question : and therefore this is a question which all questions must give way unto. If ye be not in Christ, ye had need lay aside all and look about it onely. How can men eat, drink, sleep, &c. sith the wrath of God abideth upon all unbelievers? Methinks our souls should take no content, do nothing else but faint after Christ, untill we know our interest in him. I say again, This is the grand enquiry, that businesse which all businesses must give place unto. Oh, the sloth of our souls ! Let us in time awake and rouse them up, and never rest untill we know our own estate to be good before God, that so our hearts may have comfort, and that with God.



A Treatise of Conscience.

ROM. 2. 15.

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing them witnesse and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

Have shewed you, That every man *What* is in an estate before God. And that *Consci-* hath made way now to a treatise of *ence is.* conscience ; which will shew us what estate we are in before God. I desire to handle it common-place-wise : And first I will tell you in brief what the conscience of every man is. I say, of every *man* : For Angels and devils have a conscience too : ye may see it in the speech of the Angel to John when John would have worshipped him, *I am thy fellow-servant*, saith he, *Rev. 19. 10* *see thou do it not.* Mark ; He had a conscience that could say, *I am a servant, and therefore must not take worship to me.* So for the devils : When our Saviour bade them come forth of the possessed, they say, *Art thou come to torment us* *Math. 8. 29.* *before our time.* See ; they had a conscience that told them there would be a time when they should be further tormented. But I am not to speak of such consciences, but of the conscience of man. Now the conscience of man is the judgement of man upon himself as he is subject

to Gods judgement. Divines use to expresse it in this Syllogisme, *He that truly believeth in Christ shall be saved*: My conscience telleth me this is Gods word. *But I believe truly in Christ*: My conscience telleth me this also. *Therefore I shall be saved*. And so also on the contrary side. So that conscience is a mans true judgement of himself: *If we would judge our selves*; that is, If we would bring our selves before the tribunal of conscience to receive its judgement.

1. Cor. 11.
31.

*Four
Propo-
sitions.*

Four propositions are contained in that portion of Scripture which I have chosen to make the subject of this ensuing treatise, Rom. 2. 15.

1. That there is in every man a conscience. [*Their consciences bearing them witnesse,*] Every one of them had a conscience bearing them witnesse.

2. That the light which conscience is directed to work by is knowledge. [*written in their hearts.*]

3. That the bond that bindeth a mans conscience is Gods law. [*which shew the effect of the law written in their hearts.*]

4. That the office and duty of conscience is to bear witnesse either with our selves or against our selves, accusing or excusing our selves or actions. [*bearing witnesse, and their thoughts accusing or excusing one another.*] I begin with the first.

Propo-

Proposition I.

There is in every man a conscience.

THere was a conscience in all these heathen in the text ; *their consciences bearing them witnesse.* There was a conscience in the Scribes and Pharisees : *being convicted of their own consciences.* There is a conscience in good men : as in Paul ; *Our rejoycing is this, the testimony of our conscience.* There is a conscience in wicked men : *their mind and conscience is defiled.* As it is impossible the fire should be without heat, so it is impossible that any man should be without a conscience. Indeed we use to say, Such an one hath no conscience : but our meaning is, that he hath no good conscience. But every one hath a conscience, either good or bad. The Lord engraved conscience in man when he created him at first. True it is, since the fall of man conscience is miserably corrupted ; but man can never put it off : Conscience continueth for ever in every man, whether he be in earth or heaven or hell. The most base and devilish profanelings in the world have a conscience : Let them choke it or smother it as much as they can, let them whore it or game it or drink it away as much as they are able for their hearts ; yet conscience will continue in spite of their teeth.

I. No length of time can wear this conscience out. What made Josephs brethren to remember the cruel usage they shewed him but conscience ? It was about twenty years before ; yet they could not vvear it out.

2. No violence nor force is able to suppress conscience but that one day or other it will shew it self. What made Judas go and carry back the money that he betrayed our Saviour for, and also to cry out, *I have sinned*, but conscience? No question but he laboured to suppress it; but he could not.

3. No greatnesse nor power is able to stifle conscience, but that it will one day like a band-dog lie in a sinners face. What made Pharaoh cry out, *I am wicked*, but conscience? He was a great King; and yet he was not able to overpower conscience.

4. No musick, mirth, or jovializing can charm conscience, but it will play the devil to a wretched soul for all that. What was the evil spirit of melancholy that came upon Saul, but conscience? He thought to allay it with instruments of musick; but it still came again.

5. Death it self is not able to part conscience from a sinner. What is that worm that shall never die, but onely conscience? and in hell conscience is as that fire that never goeth out.

I confesse some seem to have lost conscience quite: They can cmit good duties as though they had no conscience at all: they can deferre repentance and turning to God as though they had no more conscience then a beast: but one day conscience will appear, and shew plainly, that it was present with them every moment of their lives, and privie to all their thoughts and all their vvayes, and set before them all the things that they have done. Be men never so secure and senselesse, and seared for the present, conscience will

vwill break out either first or last : Either here or in hell it vwill appear to every man, That he hath and ever had a conscience.

Nowv the reasons vvhy the Lord did plant a *Reasons* conscience in every man living are,

1. Because the Lord is a very righteous Judge: And as he commandeth earthly judges not to judge vvithout vvitnesse : so he himself vvill not judge vvithout vvitnesse, and therefore he planteth a conscience in every one to bring in evidence for him or against him at Gods tribunall.

1.

2. Because the Lord is very mercifull. We are vvonderous forgetfull and mindlesse of God and of our ovvn souls, and have need to be quickned up to our duties : therefore the Lord hath given every one of us a conscience to be a continuall monitour. Sometime vve forget to pray, and then conscience putteth us in mind to go to God : sometime vve are dull in the duty, and conscience is as a prick to quicken us. Sometime our passions are distempered, and then conscience checketh and commandeth us to bridle them. We should never be kept in any order if it vv ere not for conscience : Therefore hath the Lord in mercy given us a conscience.

2.

The first use is, to condemne that diabolical *Use 1.* proverb common among men; *Conscience is hangd a great while ago.* No, no ; Achitophel may hang himself, but he cannot hang his conscience : Saul may kill himself, but conscience cannot be killed. It is *a worm that never dieth.* Mat. 9. 44. As the reasonable soul of man is immortall, so conscience also is immortall.

Secondly, this condemneth such as go about *Use. 2.*

to suppress conscience : Their conscience maketh them melancholick and lumpish now and then, and they go about to shake it off. Alas! why do ye go about that which is utterly impossible? Ye may suppress it for a while, and gagge it for a while; but ye can never shake it off. Conscience sticketh so close that a man may as soon shake off himself as his conscience. And

1. Cor. 11. 28. indeed his conscience is himself: *Let a man examine himself*, that is, his conscience. *Judge in your selves*, that is, Judge in your consciences.

Use 3. Thirdly, this confuteth that drunken opinion, That conscience is nothing but a present fit of melancholy. No; It causeth it may be the present melancholick fit, but it is not it. Conscience is a standing power in a man that is evermore with him, and will evermore judge him and condemne him if he be guiltie before God. It will be with him when his dumpish fit is over. Let him laugh and be merry; yet conscience lies at the bottome of all, and will spoyle all the mirth. Let the drunkard be never so joviall; I will not believe but conscience in the midst of that drunken mirth causeth some sadnesse within, and telleth him this is a very wicked life. Let the carnall hypocrite daub up the matter with good duties and good prayers and good hopes; I cannot believe but there is a conscience lieth at the bottome and telleth him he is rotten for all this. You may see this in Cain: He had been at a good duty, sacrificing to the Lord; but his countenance fell when he had done, conscience did lie at the bottome, and did tell him
God

1. Cor. 11. 28.
use 13.

Use 3.

Prov. 14. 13.

Gen. 4. 5.

God did not accept him. Conscience is with evil men at church, at sermon, at sacrament, and telleth them secretly that they are not the persons to whom the blessing of these ordinances belong.

Lastly, this may be for exhortation to the Use 4.
godly; That they would consider this, that they have ever a conscience within them; and that therefore they would labour alwayes to keep it void of offence: which was Pauls exercise, Acts 24. 16. Take heed you offend not your consciences in duties of piety towards God, in your prayings, hearings, &c. no nor in your callings, eatings, drinkings, liberties, recreations: Look alwayes to your consciences, that you offend them not, because they are ever with you. When two live ever together, they had need not offend one another; else there will be no quiet: You and your consciences must ever live together: if ye offend them, ye are like to have very ill lives. Better live with a curst scold then live with an offended conscience: ye had better offend the whole world then offend conscience. There are none whom ye are alwayes to live with; but conscience ye are alwayes to live with. Ye are not alwayes to live with your husbands, nor alwayes with your wives, nor alwayes with your parents or masters; there is a time when you must part: but conscience and you will never part: Therefore labour to keep it void of offence. And thus much of the first proposition, *There is in every man a conscience.*

Propo-

Proposition II.

The light that conscience acteth by, is knowledge.

II. proposition.

THis knowledge is twofold; 1. Of Gods law, 2. Of our selves.

1. The knowledge of Gods law. To know Gods will what is good, what is bad; what God commandeth, what he forbiddeth. Every man under heaven hath this law of God in some measure writ in his conscience. I confesse Gods children onely know Gods law to purpose, as it is a light to guide them in the way of salvation: but all the world have some measure of knowledge, whereby they may gather that there is a God, and that he ought to be worshipped and obeyed, and that he hath power over life and death. All the world have knowledge in some measure what is good and what is not, what is to be done and what not, what is according to conscience and what not. All the world have this knowledge in some measure; I do not say, enough for salvation, but enough to make them inexcusable before God for not following that light, and not living according to that knowledge which they have. If there were not some light in this behalf, some knowledge of the law of God in every man, conscience could do nothing.

2. Knowledge of our selves: This also is the light that conscience acteth by. There is in every man some measure of knowledge of himself according to the measure of knowledge that he hath

hath of Gods law. Our consciences look backward and forward ; forward to Gods law, and backward on our selves, Whether we be such as Gods law requireth, yea or no. First, ye may find this in good men. This light did the conscience of David go by : *I was upright before God*, saith his conscience, *and I kept my self from mine own iniquitie*. His conscience had a light whereby he knew what he did. Secondly, ye shall find this in wicked men. This light the conscience of Achan went by : *I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done*.

Psal. 18. 23.

Josh. 7. 20.

These are the two lights that every mans conscience goes by : It hath light in some measure to know the law of God, what he should do and what he should not do ; and it hath light in some measure to know himself, what he hath done or not done, whether he hath done as he should yea or no. Now these two lights are necessary ; as thus I prove.

First, the knowledge of Gods law is necessary, For else conscience cannot work. A drunkard might be drunk every day in the yeare, and yet conscience could not trouble him nor condemne him of sinne unless he knew the law, That God hath forbid drunkenness. And so the swearer. And so evil words and bad thoughts conscience cannot accuse for, unless there be so much light as to know they are forbidden. And therefore Divines do all say that the *Synteresis* is necessarie to the exercise of conscience. The *Synteresis* is this : When a man keeps in his mind the knowledge of the things contained in Gods law :
namely,

namely, That we must obey God, honour our parents, not commit adultery, not kill, not steal, not lie, not covet, &c. Unlesse the knowledge of these be kept in mind conscience cannot work. And therefore when we would stirre a mans conscience, we appeal to his knowledge;

1. Cor. 6. 9. *Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdome of God?* As if he had said, Your own consciences may condemne you to the pit of hell if ye be unrighteous, because your *Synterefsis* can tell you that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdome of God. This is the reason why we say that there is a naturall conscience and there is an illuminated conscience; because some have no light but onely the light of nature, some have besides the light of Gods word, which sheweth that which nature sheweth, and much more clearly, and teacheth many things more which nature cannot teach: And hence the conscience of the illightned condemneth for such things as the naturall conscience never stirreth about.

Secondly, the knowledge of our selves is needfull; else conscience cannot act neither. Though we know what Gods law requireth and what not, what is good and what not, yet unlesse we know whether we go with it or against it, conscience cannot accuse nor excuse. As for example; A close hypocrite, he knoweth well enough that the Lord hath condemned hypocrisie, and that hypocrites must have their portion in hell: yet if he do not know himself to be an hypocrite, his conscience can never condemne him for being one. And therefore both these knowledges
are

are necessary, as vvell the knowvledge of a mans self as of Gods lavv. Many vvho had a hand in crucifying our Saviour, sinned grievously; yet they sinned not against knowvledge, because they knewv not vvhat they did: *Father, forgive them, they knowv not vvhat they do.* Luke 23. 34.

Thirdly, It is a contradiction to say a blind conscience in act. The conscience cannot be blind and yet actually condemne. Indeed the conscience it self may be blind, but it can never act and be blind: If it truly accuse or excuse it must have some light. It is true, it may erroneously excuse or accuse, and yet have no true light: Seeming light is enough to do that: seeming knowvledge is enough to make conscience erroneously excuse: As they vvho killed the Apostles, their consciences excused them, and told them they did God good service: they seemed to knowv it vvas good service to God, and therefore their consciences excused them, &c. Thus ye see that the light that conscience vvorketh by is knowvledge. John 16. 2.

The use of this point is first, to let us see the Use 1. infinite necessity of knowvledge. As good have no conscience at all as conscience vvithout knowledge: for it cannot act and perform its office. This is the reason vvhy so many thousands go on in their sinnes vvithout repentance, because being ignorant they have no conscience to prick them thereunto: as Jer. 8. 6. *No man repenteth him of his wickednesse, saying, What have I done?* Why, vvhat vvas the reason that conscience did not prick them, and say, This thou hast done and that, Thus ye have rebelled,

led, &c? The text answereth in the next verse,
*My people know not the judgement of the Lord.
 The stork knoweth her time, and the turtle, and
 the swallow; but my people do not know their
 duties.*

Use 2.

Another use is, to exhort us that we would labour to perfect the light of conscience, that it may be able to guide us and direct us unto heaven. Our conscience hath knowledge enough by the light of nature to make us inexcusable, and to clear the justice of God though he should damne us for ever: but there must be a greater light then that, that must guide us to heaven. O let us pray to Christ the true light to set up this light in us, that we may never be at a losse in our way to happinesse, never step out of the right path but our conscience may be able to put us in again, never go slowly but our conscience may spurre us on faster; that our conscience may not be like the snuff of a candle in a socket, that flameth up now and then, and then is dark again, and again it flameth out and is dark again: A man may see his book by it, but he cannot see to reade; he may see his pen and ink by it, but he cannot see to write; a woman may see her needle and cloth by it, but she cannot see to work: so it is with some mens consciences: Their light is so dimme that they can see the duties, but they cannot see to do them; they can see the commandments of God, but they cannot see to obey them. O labour to perfect the light of your consciences, that ye may see to walk by them. And thus much also of the second proposition, *The light that conscience acteth by, is knowledge.*

Now

Now I should come to the third proposition which as I first propounded them was this, *The bond that bindeth conscience is Gods law*: But I will now a little alter the method, and make the other which was propounded last to be the third in the handling; and it is this,

Proposition III.

The office of Conscience is to bear witnesse, to accuse or excuse.

Conscience is put into this office by God himself. It is Gods officer: Not onely his register-book that shall be opened at the day of judgement, wherein is set down our thoughts, words and deeds; but it is a preacher also to tell us our duty both towards God and towards man; yea, it is a powerfull preacher; it exhorteth, urgeth, provoketh: yea, the most powerfull preacher that can be; it will cause the stoutest and stubbornest heart under heaven to quake now and then; it will never let us alone till it have brought us either to God or to the devil. Conscience is joyned in commission with Gods own spirit to be an instructour unto us in the way we should walk; so that the spirit and it are resisted or obeyed together, grieved or delighted together: We cannot sinne against conscience but we sinne also against Gods spirit; we cannot check our own consciences but we check and quench the holy spirit of God.

III.
The office of Conscience is to bear witnesse.

The office of conscience to our selves is, to bear witnesse: *My conscience beareth me witnesse*, Rom. 9. 1.

D

faith

faith Paul. Conscience is alwayes ready to do this office, if it shall at any time be invited unto it : For conscience looketh sometimes for inviting ; sometimes it will not bear witness unless we invite it and call upon it so to do. But there will come a time when it will do it and must do it and shall do it, namely at death or at judgement : then it will bear witness whether men invite it or no. Now it may be suppressed and silenced and kept under from witnessing ; but then it must bear witness and shall, either excusing or accusing, acquitting or condemning, *when God shall judge the secrets of mens hearts,* as the Apostle speaketh.

*Four
Prop-
erties of
Consci-
ence.*

The properties that are given unto conscience in the discharge of its office are foure : 1. It is supreme ; 2. It is impartiall ; 3. It is faithfull ; 4. It is privie.

1. It is supreme : It hath highest authoritie ; it is the most uncontrollable and ablest witness that can be : the greatest, weightiest witness in the world ; better then ten thousand witnesses. Though all the world do condemne us, yet if our own consciences do not, we need not fear : And so on the contrary, if conscience do condemne us, it will be small comfort though all the world flatter and commend and excuse us. It is a supreme witness : Though all the Angels in heaven should come and bear witness, their witness is not so uncontrollable as conscience is. There is no appealing from the witness of conscience ; we must be tried by it. If conscience do accuse and condemne us, the Lord onely is greater then our conscience, 1. John 3. 20. and will give

give judgement with it when it doth its office. And if our conscience do not condemne us, we may be confident to stand before all the judges and kings in the vworld, yea, *we may have confidence towards God*, saith the text. 24. And as conscience is supreme in bearing of witnessse, so also it is supreme in commanding. All the commands of it are powerfull and supreme: it will not be slighted: it bindeth kings and princes: Nay, though God himself command the contrary, yet can we not disobey conscience without sinne. By this it appeareth, that when conscience doth witnessse its witnessse is supreme; when conscience commandeth, its command is supreme.

2. Conscience as it is supreme in witnessing or commanding so it is impartiall in judging. It respecteth no persons, no estates, but accuseth the richest as well as the poorest, the greatest as well as the meanest. It made great Belshazzar so to quake *that the joynts of his loyns were loosed, and his knees smote one against another*, Dan. 5. 6. It made great Felix to tremble to heare Paul speak of righteousness and of judgement. Felix thought to scare Paul; but conscience scared Felix. So on the other side, it is impartiall in excusing. It will give evidence of the good works of the poorest in the world as well as of the wealthiest. Art thou never so mean? thy conscience will be as ready to excuse thee if thou hast done well, as if thou wert the greatest. It is impartiall in its office: Others, it may be, dare not or will not accuse, but conscience spareth none, no not it self: Though its accusations do

load and burden and torment it self, yet it will do its office.

3. Conscience also is faithfull in its office and sincere. It alwaies speaketh of us as it thinketh. It may be deceived and mistaken for a time, but it never speaketh contrary to what it thinketh: It is a faithfull and sincere witnesse of our thoughts, words, actions, and courses, whether they be good or evil, so farre as it is illightned by Gods word. It ever giveth evidence aright; it never flattereth nor condemneth any without a cause: It is a faithfull and a very upright witnesse. Others may dissemble with us, and commend us and applaud us when we are naught, and call us good men and good women when we are nothing so: but this will tell us plainly how vile and sinfull we are; and if we say we are good when we are not, it will tell us plainly we lie. *1. Job 2. 4.* *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.* Mark; though he say it, yet his conscience giveth him the lie. It is faithfull again in excusing. It beareth witnesse of every good dutie we perform and of whatsoever good is in us. Though all Jobs friends spake evil of him, and God himself by his outward judgements seemed to condemne him for a wicked man, yet still his conscience (like a faithfull witnesse) did not forsake him. nay, it offered to reason with God himself, *Job 13. 3.* *I would reason with God: I know I shall be justified, and I will never forsake mine innocency till I die.* Still his conscience stood for him and excused him. Thus on both sides conscience is a faithfull and sincere witnesse: it will not be corrupted to speak

It will speak otherwise then it knoweth the matter is.

4. It is most privy to what it doth witnesse. It is more privy to what we have done then all the world : It can say more for us or against us then all the world. *Thou knowest all the wickednesse that thy heart is privy unto*, saith Solomon to Shimei 1. Kings 2. 44.

The use of all this is ; Seeing conscience is so *Use.* supreme, so impartiall, so faithfull, so privy, we should take heed how we do any thing that might give it advantage against us. If we were to appear before an earthly judge to answer for our behaviour, and should have a companion present continually with us, marking every thing in us, telling us of every fault, and witnessing it against us unto the judge, how carefull would we be of doing any thing that might give him advantage against us ? Lo, we have conscience as a continuall watch-man, espying out all our wayes, setting down whatever we do amisse, checking us for it for the present, and one day accusing us before God and setting all things in order before our faces ; Oh how should we then labour to get into Christ Jesus, that our consciences may be purged in his blood, and study all our life long to keep peace and friendship with them. Wo be to them who live in their sinnes ! They will need no other witnesse to come against them to condemne them for ever but this witnesse conscience which lieth continually in their bowels.

This I have spoken for the office of conscience, which is to bear witnesse either with us or against us : Now the parts of this bearing witnesse are,

first, its single witnessing; secondly, its judiciall witnessing. By *single bearing witnessse* I mean that conscience beareth witnessse what we have done, and what we do, and what we intend to do, and what we are: By *judiciall bearing witnessse* I mean that conscience doth passe sentence on the same whether it be good or evil, whether it be concerning the action or the person.

Of Conscience
single
bearing
witnessse.

First, therefore of the single bearing witnessse of conscience: And that is about three things: 1. What we have done; 2. What we intend to do; 3. What is the frame and bent of our heart.

1. It beareth witnessse what we have done; what in our childhood, what in our youth, what in our riper age, what openly, what secretly. Those things which seem to be forgotten conscience will remember them to us: Like a writing in marble, though it may be filled and choked with dust and covered with rubbish, yet when that is done away, and the stone swept clean, then the writing will appear legible; so though mens deeds may for the present seem to be forgotten, yet they are written in their hearts with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, as Origen observeth upon Jer. 17. 1. Now the thoughts and cares of this life put them out of our minds; but the time will come when all worldly businesse shall cease, and the onely businesse shall be to look into the records of conscience. We use to say, Conscience hath a very good memory. The chief butler had forgot his promise unto Joseph; but his conscience remembered

membred him of it two years after : *I remember my faults this day*, saith his conscience. Adonibezek had forgot his cruelty ; but his conscience brought it to his mind : *As I have done so God hath requited me*, saith his conscience. Gen. 41. 9.
Judg. 1. 7.

2. Conscience beareth witness of what we intend and purpose to do, whether against God or man. It will testifie every purpose and project of the heart though it be never acted, though it die in the heart and never come to light. Men little think of this : *Tush* (saith one) *I never did such a thing, though I once intended it, or had some thoughts about it.* Mark ; those very thoughts will conscience bring forth and testifie what they were. Heare the Apostle, *in that day God shall judge the secrets of men*, &c. Rom. 2. 16. The most hidden things conscience shall bring to light, and Christ shall judge them.

3. Conscience beareth witness of the bent and frame of our hearts, what we affect most and love most, and rejoyce and delight in most, and desire most and grieve for most, what our affections runne upon most, whether upon God or the world, whether upon heaven or the things of this life. Conscience bare witness to David, that his delight was in the law of the Lord, that God was his portion, that Gods statutes were his counsellours. Conscience bare witness to the false teachers in Christs time, that they affected vain glory and the praise of men more then the praise of God. Conscience bare witness to Demas, that notwithstanding his fair profession his heart was set upon the world. Conscience

bare witnesse to Jehu, that for all his seeming zeal his heart was not upright.

Ob. 1. But it may be objected, How can this be? *The*
Jer. 17. 9. heart is deceitfull above all things: who can
know it?

Ans. *Who can know it?* That is, Who else can know
 it but a man himself? None under God can
 know the heart of man but a mans own consci-
 ence, the spirit of man that is in him. I confesse
 a man may be ignorant of some secret and par-
 ticular deceit in his heart: but who knoweth not
 the generall standing of his own heart? or may
 know the chief bent of his own soul. David in a
Psal. 30. 6. particular deceit was ignorant: I said in my pro-
ssperitie, I shall never be moved, never distrust
God more, never be disquieted in my mind
more. He was deceived in that particular; but
he knew very well the generall and chief bent
of his heart, that it was truly set upon God and
upon holinesse. 2. It is true, many men take it
that their hearts are set upon God when they are
not: but what is the reason? Not because they
do not or may not know the contrary, that they
love the world most: but because they will not
know it, they are unwilling to believe it, they
are loth to have any bad conceit of themselves.
So that when Jeremy saith, The heart is deceit-
full above all things: who can know it? his
 meaning is, What carnall man can abide to
 know the worst of himself? 3. It is not because
 they know it not, but because they will not heare
 the testimony of conscience: but when it telleth
 them truly how the case is with them, they ga-
 ther all the rotten and broken pieces of argu-
 ments

ments together to stop the mouth of conscience, and to perswade themselves to think well of themselves. 4. Men seem not to know their own hearts, not because they do not know what they are, but because they are ignorant of Gods law whereby they should judge of themselves. They know their hearts are set on the world, and that the bent and frame of their affections are placed on earthly things: but they hope an under-affection to God will be accepted, to love God in the second place will serve the turn. They know they are carnall; but they hope such carnality may be in a man and yet he be right.

Yea, but a mans heart may say on the contrary side, that he loveth the world more then he loveth God when he doth not: how then doth conscience bear right witness? I answer, *Ob. 2.*

This ariseth either from the strength of corruption and weaknesse of grace: We look into our selves, and see our corruptions violent, and our love to God small; and so we are deceived, not seeing the radicall power of this love of God, which in regard of its virtue is stronger then the other: As a fool, if he should feel hot water, would conclude that there is no cold at all in it; whereas there is radicall cold in that water, such as will expell all that heat in a little space. Or else this ariseth from anguish of spirit, which so disturbeth the mind that it cannot see its own condition nor be capable of the comforts belonging unto it; as it was with the Israelites, Exod. 6. 9. otherwise doubtlesse we may know our own hearts; and when our conscience beareth witness its witness is right. *Ansiv.*

I. Use,

Use 1. I. Use, of reproof to those who stand out against the witness of their conscience, and like hard-hearted felons plead still, *Not guiltie*, though never so much evidence come against them, though conscience oft tell them, this they have done, thus they do, such they are. Oh stop not your eares against conscience; stand not out against it, but believe its testimony, and make use of it to repent of the evil it accuseth of while mercy may be had, before God himself cometh and joyneth with conscience to condemne for ever.

Use 2. II. It serveth for singular encouragement to all to abound in good works. Conscience will bear witness of them all to our unspeakable comfort in the time of afflictions, yea at death and judgement. Job felt it a sweet thing to have conscience give in testimony of his integrity and uprightness: When his friends proved *miserable comforters*, and God himself seemed to *write bitter things against him*, yet his conscience witnessed that he had been *eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*, he had fed the hungry and clothed the naked and comforted the fatherlesse. There is not a good thing that ever we do but conscience will afford us the sweetness and comfort of it in our troubles: *Remember, O Lord, saith Hezekiah, that I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart.*

Isai. 38. 3.

2. The judicial bearing witness of conscience.

We have spoken of consciences single bearing witness: Now followeth its judicial bearing witness; which is when it passeth sentence upon the morall of our actions, whether they be good or evil, whether blessed or cursed. This is per-

performed by a Logicall discourse, by way of reasoning on this manner, *The word saith, Who- ever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adulterie in his heart*: That is the *synteresis*. Now the assumption; *But I have had wanton eyes and lustfull lookings after a woman*: That is the single bearing witness of conscience. *Therefore I have committed adul- tery in my heart*: That is the judiciary sentence of conscience which it passeth on a mans self. So again; *Whosoever crucifieth the flesh with the affections and lusts, he is in Christ*: But, saith conscience, *I crucifie the flesh with its affections and lusts*; *Therefore I am in Christ*. Though there be not the form of this discourse in our consciences, yet there is the force of it: for when conscience doth judicially witness against any man or for any man, it doth it by the word, and proceedeth in the way which is propound- ed.

The use of this is, First for comfort to the god- *Use 1.*
ly, who may hence gather the assurance of their salvation from the rule of Gods word and the witness of their conscience that they walk by this rule. The word saith, *He that hungrereth and thirsteth after righteousness shall be filled*; *He that doeth these things shall never fall, &c.* *Manh. 5.6. 1. Pet. 1.10.*
Get the rule of your hearts and lives to meet and ye have what ye desire. O what infinite mercy is this to all godly souls, that the Lord hath planted this conscience in their bosomes, that they need not go farre for their comfort: their own consciences and the rule may preach it to them.

Secondly,

Use 2. Secondly, The wicked on the other side, if they continue as they are, may hence gather arguments for their own damnation. If the rule and conscience might be heard they would speak bitter things against them, and give a fearfull sentence on them. It may be they can smother their consciences now for a time ; but they will one day reade them a fearfull lecture. I speak not now onely of those who drown their consciences in their cups, and sear their consciences by their grosse sinnes; but of those who would seem godly and perform good duties, but with hypocriticall hearts and carnall minds. O that they would heare but conscience argue a little in this manner ; *To be carnally minded is death, that is, is an evident signe of a man that is in the state of death and damnation, But, saith conscience, I am carnally minded ; or we are carnally minded : Therefore we have an argument about us of death and damnation.* And so also for all other sinnes ; There is not a wicked man under heaven but he may argue out of his own miserable estate by his conscience, or he might if it were awaked, as one day it will be.

Use 3.

Thirdly, this may serve for instruction. No matter what opinions men have of us in the world: The question is, What is the judgement of our own consciences upon us ? It may be thou art taken for a man of great knowledge and a forward man in godlinesse ; it may be the godly dare not judge otherwise of thee : but the question is, What is the judgement of conscience ? Doth not thy conscience tell thee thou art but a proud fool, conceited of thy knowledge,
and

and lovest to heare thy self talk? And so for thy performance of good duties, what testimony doth conscience give of the manner of doing of them? The testimoniall of conscience is above all 2. Cor. 1. 12. testimonials in the world: all the good opinions of the world are not worth a rush without this: If conscience can say that in our wayes we seek to please God, and allow not our selves in any evil vway, this testimony is full and satisfactory, and onely this.

Yet further concerning this judiciall vvitnessse of conscience: It is either about things to be done or omitted, or things already done or omitted. The judiciall vvitnessse of conscience about things to be done or omitted is double: 1. To judge out of Gods lavv vvwhether it be good or evil; 2. To counsel out of our ovvn judgements either to do it or forbear it according as the nature of the action is: If it be good, conscience vvill counsel us to do it; if bad, to forbear it. The judiciall vvitnessse of conscience about things already done is fourefold: 1. To approve; 2. To absolve; 3. To mislike; 4. To condemne. I begin vvith the first, the judiciall vvitnessse of conscience about things to be done or omitted: vvhere I shall consider, first, the Office of conscience in this behalf, *viz.* 1. To judge, 2. To counsel: and then the Adjuncts of conscience in discharging this office.

1. Conscience judgeth of the thing to be done, 1. Conscience judgeth. vvwhether it be good or evil, lavvfull or unlavvfull. As vve trie the vveight of gold by a pair of balances, so conscience trieth all our actions by Gods vvord. It is the oracle of God: As the

Jcvs

Jevvs vvent to Gods oracle to enquire of the Lord, so our conscience is Gods oracle to enquire of and to determine of things whether they be good or evil : It is a judge in the bosome. When the question in Corinth was, whether women should be uncovered when they pray, the Apostle sendeth them to conscience for judgement, *Judge in your selves*, saith he. *whether it be comely or no* ; that is, Put it to the judgement of your own consciences. So say the disciples to the Jews, *whether it be better to obey God or man, judge ye* ; Put it to your own consciences. Thus ye see it is the office of conscience to judge of an action to be done whether it be good or bad, lawfull or unlawfull.

1. Cor. 11. 13.

2. Conscience coun-
selleth.

Isai 30. 21.

2. The second office of conscience is to counsel for the doing of that which is good and forbearing of that which is evil. This is that faithful friend in our bosome, that voyce within us and *behind us saying, This is the way ; walk in it*. Mark the words there ; ye see these two offices of conscience. *This is the way* ; there is the judgement of conscience : and *walk in it* ; there is the counsel of conscience. Nay, conscience doth not onely give good counsel, but if it have leave it will bring arguments to perswade to follow it : it will tell us the thing is well-pleasing to God, of good report, that which will bring peace to our hearts. And so on the contrary, if it be evil, conscience will counsell us to forbear, yea bring arguments to dissuade ; *O do it not: it will tend to the dishonour of God, and be offensive to others, and wound our souls, &c.* It was conscience that withheld David from
killing

killing Saul, and prest him from it by a strong argument, *O he is the Lords Anointed.* It was conscience that withheld Joseph from yielding to the enticings of his mistresse, and yielded him an argument to dissuade him from it, *How shall I do this great wickednesse, and so sinne against God?* It was conscience that dissuaded Nehemiah from flying, *Should such a man as I flie?* 1.Sam.24.10 Nehem.6.11. And if one argument will not serve, conscience will use more.

The use of this may be first for Instruction. *Use 1.* Hence we learn that naturall men may have a conscience urging to good and restraining from evil. There is no man so evil or ignorant but he hath naturally some light with him by which conscience is set on work to advise and to counsel, and to say, *This is very good; do it: This is very sinfull, forbear it.* This therefore is no signe of grace in any man to have his conscience calling upon him to do good or dissuading him from evil: The very heathen had so according to their light; yea and in many of them it was forcible to restrain them from many sinnes which they were inclined unto. And so may many men be put upon many good duties, not for any love or liking of that which is good, but because they would please and satisfie conscience, which otherwise will not suffer them to be quiet. It was conscience that kept Abimelech from defiling Sarah, and yet a carnall man.

Here then a question may be asked, Whether *Object.* a mere naturall man can avoid sinne for conscience sake.

I answer, That this expression, *for conscience* *Ans.* sake,

Rom. 13. 5.
1. Pet. 2. 19.

sake, may be taken two wayes : either 1. for conscience of the commandment of God and love to it ; and so none but Gods children do obey for conscience sake: and so it is meant when Paul speaketh of *being subject for conscience sake*, and Peter speaketh of *suffering wrong for conscience sake*. Or secondly, *for conscience sake*, that is, when conscience it self inforced by fear compelleth one to do a thing or not to do it: As we say, *My conscience will not suffer me*. Thus carnall men come to church for conscience sake, and pray for conscience sake, &c. that is, Their conscience driveth them to these duties, and will not be quiet without they perform them.

Use 2.

Secondly, Sith a mere naturall man may have a conscience stirring him up to good as well as the truly godly, it will not be amisse to give you the difference. The difference is in three things ;

1 Sam. 24.
10.

1. A godly mans conscience smiteth him and stirreth him very kindly, so that he melteth before God. When David had numbred the people, the text saith, *his heart smote him*. The word signifieth, it smote him kindly, gave him a loving blow, made him spread forth himself before God. A wicked mans conscience giveth him a dead blow, a churlish and fullen blow.

Psal. 4.

2. A godly mans conscience stirreth him reciprocally : He stirreth up his conscience, and his conscience stirreth up him; he speaketh to his conscience, and his conscience speaketh to him : The stirring is reciprocally. *Commune with your hearts. What hast thou done, O my soul? Thus*
and

and thus have I done, saith the soul. Whereas a wicked mans conscience speaketh to him, but he cannot endure to speak to his conscience : his conscience stirreth him, but he hath no will to stirre his conscience ; nay, he doth all he can to keep it quiet : But the godly as his conscience smiteth him so he smiteth upon his conscience : *I smote upon my thigh*, saith Ephraim. The *Jer. 31. 19.* godly, when conscience stirreth them, they stirre it and provoke it to speak out all it hath : to say. *Commune with your own heart, and be still* : They are still to give it full audience, and call upon it to speak on ; *What hast thou more to say, Conscience ?*

3. A godly mans conscience stirreth him to good ; and he is resolved to go to the utmost of what conscience stirreth him unto : that with Job, *his conscience may not reproch him all his dayes* *Job. 27. 6.* for not following it : Whereas it is otherwise with the wicked.

3. The third use is this ; Seeing conscience is *Use 3.* appointed by God to be our guide and our counsellour, it should be our practice in every thing we do to ask counsel of conscience whether we were best do it or no. I say that conscience is Gods oracle : Whatsoever we are to do we should (as David) enquire of Gods oracle, *May I go this way to work, or shall I take an other course ?* *Heare counsel and receive instruction*, saith Salomon, *that thou mayst be wise at thy latter end.* *Prov. 19. 20.* Conscience is a faithfull counsellour ; heare it. It is the great mercie of God that thou hast such a privie counsel : Thou canst go no where but it is about thee to advise thee. Therefore

fore as Rehoboam said to his green heads, *What counsel give you?* so say thou to thy conscience *What advise givest thou, Conscience, in this case?* my carnall friends counsel me thus and thus; mine own carnall heart and lusts would have me go this way: but, Conscience, *what counsel givest thou?*

Use 4.

4. The fourth use is to reprove the custome of most men, who with Ahab refuse the counsel of that one true wholesome prophet, and have four hundred other counsellours who will give counsel as they would have it: They regard not this good Michaiah; they slight the counsel of conscience; their lusts and their carnall reason and flesh and bloud are their counsellours; *The counsel of conscience, they say, is not good at this time*, as he said of Achitophels: They will heare conscience at another time, but not now. But take heed; for if you reject the counsel of conscience, it is because the Lord hath a purpose to destroy you.

The Adjuncts of conscience, which shew themselves in the discharge of this dutie of judging and counselling.

The adjuncts of conscience.

THE adjuncts are of two sorts: 1. such as respect consciences abilitie to discharge its duty; 2. such as accompanie conscience in the discharge thereof.

Of the former sort are four: 1. An illlightened conscience. 2. An erroneous conscience. 3. A doubting conscience. 4. A scrupulous conscience.

Of the latter } 1. A faithfull conscience.
sort are two : } 2. An unfaithfull conscience.

First, the illightened conscience is such a conscience as is in it self rightly informed by Gods law, and doth direct and judge aright in matters both concerning our generall and particular calling, both towards God and towards man. And this illightened conscience is a great blessing of God : 1. because it is the proper effect of the law of God ; 2. because it is a very great advantage to a man in the whole course of his life when a mans conscience is illightened to direct him in every case what he is to do.

If an illightened conscience be so great a blessing, then be thankfull to God for it if ye have it, and use it as a blessing. Some have it, and use it not as a blessing : The devils have it as a curse; many vicked men have it as a curse : It maketh their sinnes the greater. Like as a colour, the more light shineth upon it the greater it is. green is more green, and white is more white, and red more red, &c. So it is with sinne : the more light thy conscience hath the greater is thy sinne; thy drunkenness is more heinous, and thy swearing and the like, by how much committed against more light. Oh therefore make use of the light of thy conscience, as David did : *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.* Psal. 119. 105.

What followeth? *I have sworn, and I will perform it, to keep thy righteous judgements.* Mark; when his conscience was illightened, he bound himself to follow the directions thereof.

2. Is an illightened conscience such a blessing? Use 2.

O labour to get it ; be not without it for a world.

world. Thou wert better walk blindfold over narrow bridges and planks, better vwalk in the dark through a place full of downfalls and marlpits, then walk without a conscience illightened. *He who walketh in the darknesse knoweth not whither he goeth*, John 12. 35. O labour therefore to get a conscience illightened. It is true, a man may have an illightened conscience and yet go to hell : but this is most certain ; without an illightened conscience a man cannot go to heaven. And if thy conscience be something illightened, yet labour for more light. It will prevent many a stumble, save thee from many a knock. Thou knowest not vwhat case thou mayst be in, vwhat difficult straits thou mayest be put unto : if thou hast not light in thy conscience to direct thee, what wilt thou do ?

11. An erroneous conscience.

2. An erroneous conscience.

SEcondly, an erroneous conscience is, vwhen conscience not understanding Gods lawv, or misapplying it, doth judge amisse and direct amisse. So Josephs conscience for a while was in an error when Mary was found vvith child : His conscience informed him that he must either make her a publick example or put her away privily. Here his conscience erred about this particular untill the Angel had better informed him.

Quest. There is a question here raised by Divines, and it is, Whether we ought to follow conscience erring or no ? A question very necessary to be handled, partly because of mens ignorance in this kind, and partly because of the frequency of the case. I answer thus ;

First,

First, vve must not obey conscience erring or *Ans.* counselling to that vvhich is evil; For our error of conscience doth not make the transgression of the lawv to be no sinne; though an erroneous conscience lead us to transgresse it. 1. Because the lawv of God is above conscience; and therefore the commandment of Gods lawv standeth in full force though conscience command contrary to it. Suppose a man should thinke in his conscience he might not take an oath though never so lawfully called thereunto by the magistrate and in never so necessary a case, when as the word of God commandeth us to swear in truth, in righteousness, and in judgement; I must follow the commandment of God rather then conscience, because Gods law is above conscience. 2. Because if I follow my conscience vvhhen it is in an error, I offend not onely against Gods lawv but I offend also my conscience: For though for the present while conscience is erroneous it doth not take offense, yet vvhhen it cometh to see its ovvn error then it will. Therefore this is our first answer, We must not obey conscience erring, or counselling to that which is evil. If our conscience should counsel us to tell a lie to help our neighbour, that is evil and against Gods lawv; and therefore if in doing it vve do obey conscience, vve sinne.

Secondly vve answer, That an erroneous conscience vvhatever it commandeth (though the lawv of God commandeth the clean contrary) yet vve cannot disobey it vvitout sinne. For this is a constant rule, We alwayes sinne vvhhen vve disobey conscience: If conscience erre not,

then in disobeying it vve sinne double, against the law and against conscience: if conscience do erre and vve disobey it, vve sinne too; for though vve do not sinne against the law, yet vve sinne against conscience, and so against the law too; not as though vve were bound to obey conscience vwhen it erreth, and yet vve sinne if vve disobey it.

3. Thirdly, Albeit it be alwayes a sinne to disobey conscience though it erre, yet it is not alwayes a sinne to obey conscience when it erreth. Let us consider three propositions, and you shall see vwhat I mean. First, If conscience think that to be commanded which is absolutely forbidden, or that to be forbidden vvhich is expressly commanded, then vve sinne vvhich side soever we take: As if an ignorant man thinks in his conscience that he is bound to pray to Saints departed, which thing the Lord hath expressly forbidden: if this man do pray unto Saints, he sinneth, because the Lord hath expressly forbid him to do it; if he do not pray unto Saints, he sinneth too, because his conscience telleth him he is commanded to pray unto them. The second proposition is this, If conscience hold a thing indifferent to do or not to do which yet is not indifferent but absolutely commanded, then it is alwayes a sinne not to do it, but it is no sinne to do it. The third proposition is this, If conscience hold a thing necessarie which God hath left indifferent, as if a man in conscience thought that he ought to pray foure times a day (which thing yet God hath left indifferent) in this he is bound to obey conscience though it erre. And it

is no sinne to obey conscience thus erring; though it be a sinne in conscience thus to erre.

The use of this is, I. To let us see vvhhat a sacred soveraigne thing a mans conscience is. It is alwayes a sinne to disobey conscience vvhether it erre or no, as it is alwayes a sinne to disobey God. A man can never go against his conscience but he sinneth. 1. Because conscience is our guide: It is our invvard and our inseparable guide; vve can never come by any direction but by conscience; vve can never let in the commandment of God but onely by conscience: and therefore the Lord hath made it a very soveraigne thing. 2. Because vve break a commandment through the loyns of a sinne, vvhether we go against conscience. Ajax light upon a beast and slew it: his conscience thought verily it vvas a man; *Kill it not*, saith conscience, *it is a man*: he goeth against his conscience and killeth it. His conscience here vvas in an errour, yet he as truly guilty of murder before God as if he had indeed slain a man, because he slew a man through the loyns of this beast: His bloody mind looked at a man, and smote at a man, and slew a man. So vvhether conscience is erroneous, and thinketh this is a commandment of God; it is not so, but he thinketh it so in his conscience; if he do contrary he breaketh a commandment though it be none, because the errour of his conscience made it one to him. Was not Herod truly guilty of the murder of Christ? He thought in his conscience that Christ had been among the infants slain at Bethlehem. Thus conscience is a soveraigne thing: It is alwayes a sinne to

go against it erre or not erre: and if it be a sinne to go against conscience vwhen it erreth, vwhat a sinne is it to go against it vwhen it doth not erre?

Use 2.

Isa. 65. 3.

II. This may serue for a vvord of exhortation, to exhort men to bevvare lest they sinne against conscience; especially vwhen conscience is in the right. Conscience is as Gods face in a man: when conscience looketh on thee, the Lord looketh on thee. It is true, the Lord looketh on thee alvvayes: but thou mayest see the Lords looking upon thee vwhen conscience looketh on thee: And therefore thou never sinnest against conscience but thou provokest the Lord to his face, vwhen not onely God seeth thee but thou seest him. Thy conscience shevveth thee the Lord; it presenteth God before thine eyes, commanding or forbidding, *Wilt thou do the evil now? Wilt thou omit the good duty now?* When conscience findeth fault thou dost novv provoke the Lord to his face. If it be such a sinne to sinne against conscience in an errour, it is much more a sinne to sinne against conscience it being in the right. Thus much of a conscience erring.

III. A doubting conscience.

3. A doubting conscience.

As Doubting conscience is such a conscience as so hangeth in suspense that it knoweth not which way to take: it knoweth not which is the sinne and which not. If it goes this way to work, *It may be I shall sinne*, saith conscience: if that way, *It may be I shall sinne too*, saith conscience. Such a man sinneth which way soever he taketh. The reason is this, because he doubteth.

eth. *He that doubteth is condemned if he eat,* Rom. 14. 23.
saith the Apostle: *for whatsoever is not of faith is sinne.* Suppose a man doubteth whether it be lawfull for him to do such a thing, and doubteth also whether he may lawfully omit the doing it; in such a case whether he do it or not do it he sinneth, because both wayes he doubteth. Yet here these rules are very usefull.

1. *Rule;* When conscience doubteth on the one part and is resolved on the other, we must refuse the doubting part and take that wherein we are certain and sure. As for example; When one doubteth of the lawfulness of playing at cards and dice; he is sure it is no sinne not to play, but whether he may lawfully play he doubteth: in this case he is bound not to play. So when one doubteth whether it be a sinne not to call his family together every day to prayer; Gods ministers tell him he must or he sinneth: *I doubt of that*, saith he. Do you so? but you are sure it is no sinne to do it: Therefore you are bound to do it, because you are bound to decline the doubtfull part and take that which is certain. And so of all other the like particulars.

2. When conscience doubteth on both sides which is the sinne and which not, then a man ought to do that which is most void of offense. As for example; Say an Anabaptist amongst us doubteth whether it be a sinne in him to bring his child to church to be baptized, or a sinne to refuse; here is rule is, That that which is most void of offense, and most agreeable to brotherly unity and concord, is to be taken, the balance hanging otherwise even; and the arguments to
urge

urge both the one or the other seeming of like weight, then this must be put into the scale and resolve the doubt.

Rule 3. 3. It is lawfull to do some things when yet our conscience doubteth of the lawfulness of them. For we must consider there are two kinds of doubting: there is a speculative doubting, and there is a practicall doubting. Speculative doubting is to doubt of the lawfulness of the thing it self to be done: Practicall doubting is to doubt of the lawfulness of the doing of it. Now this latter is not alwayes a sinne, but the other is: As for example; If a servant be commanded of his master to attend on him on the Lords day, he knoweth not what his businesse should be, and perhaps doubteth it is not of such moment as to be done on that day; yet he hath no reason to deny his attendance: in this case though he doubt of the lawfulness of the thing done, yet he need not doubt of the doing of it, because he knoweth not what the businesse is, and hath no reason whereby he is able to justifie his refusall. And so much also of a doubting conscience.

IV. *A scrupulous conscience.*

4 A scrupulous conscience.

THe difference between a doubting conscience and a scrupulous conscience is this; A doubtfull conscience hangeth in suspense, and doubteth which is the sinne and which is lawfull; but a scrupulous conscience inclineth to the lawfulness of the thing to be done, but yet not without many doubts and scruples, because of some difficulties which it hath heard of, and which

which it knoweth not how to answer or resolve. The rule which here we must go by is this, When we incline to the lawfulness of the thing, we should labour to suppress all difficulties and ambiguities which cause us to doubt. The Apostle includeth this rule in that word *fully*; *Let every man be fully perswaded in his heart*: Get all difficulties removed, all stumblings, and stickings, and hoverings, and scruples taken away.

But how if that cannot be done? how if we *Quest.* cannot get all scruples removed?

If that cannot be done, then it is lawfull to *Ans.* follow conscience notwithstanding the doubts and scruples of it. Observe that place well, Deut. 13. 1, &c. the Lord commandeth if a false prophet should come amongst them to draw them from the truth, and should shew a signe or miracle to confirm his doctrine, and the signe should come to passe (which might put doubts and scruples into their consciences) nevertheless conscience inclining to the truth they are bound to stand to that: for these doubts and scruples do not argue a want of faith, but onely a weakness of it.

I. This sheweth what need we have to labour to have our consciences rightly informed. *Use 1.* It is a comfortable thing for a Christian to have his conscience so fully illightened as that he can without doubting or scruple discharge the duties both of his generall and particular calling: And it is a great disturbance to a Christians mind, when his conscience is so weak and ignorant that he cannot perform his duties without doubts

doubts and scruples vvwhether he is right or no, especially in matters of greatest moment. It is a great misery to have our consciences blind, vvwhich should be our guides, and vvwhich it is a sinne to disobey. This is the reason vvwhy S. Paul doth so often speak, *I would not have you ignorant*, 1. Cor. 10. 1. and 11. 3. It is a very great misery that ones conscience should be ignorant vvwhat to do, vvwhat to hold, vvwhat to follow: I say, it is a lamentable miserie, that many vvwho have followvd the directions of conscience, should by it be led to death and damnation, to do things contrary to Gods vvword. What a misery vvvas it for the Jevvs to have zeal and not according to knowvledge? &c.

Use 2.

Prov. 29. 1.

Means to
get know-
ledge.

I.

Psal. 119 73.

II. This should teach us to use the means truly to inform conscience. *Without knowledge the heart is not good*; that is, it is most profane. There be three means to get knowvledge. 1. Let us pray unto God that he vvould open our understandings; that as he hath given us consciences to guide us, so also he vvould give our guides eyes that they may be able to direct us aright. The truth is, it is God onely that can soundly illighten our consciences: and therefore let us pray unto him to do it. All our studying, and reading, and hearing, and conferring will never be able to do it: it is onely in the power of him who made us to do it. *Thy hands have made and fashioned me: O give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.* He who made our consciences, he onely can give them this heavenly light of true knowledge and right

right understanding: and therefore let us seek earnestly to him for it. 2. We must seek it in humilitie, alwayes suspecting our own knowledge. We are not too confidently and presumptuously to trust to our own judgement, and despise or neglect the judgement of others. *The humble God will teach: Pride and self-conceit- ednesse blindeth exceedingly.* 3. We must seek with sobriety, alwayes contenting our selves with that knowledge which is most necessary, and not be curious about vain and idle-brained questions, or solicitous to answer every objection that shall be raised up against the truth. A lover of the truth should not be ready to entertain all objections against it, and never be settled till he can answer all that can be cast in; which will be never. It is not expected that there should be in every man such a ripenesse of judgement and such a measure of illumination as that he should be able to dispute with the most learned, or answer every objection that can be raised: But we must with that good Martyr say, *Though I cannot dispute for Christ I can die for him:* We must be content with our measure, to be wise unto sobriety.

III. Those godly souls that have weak consciences must use them very gently: *Scrupulosi non sunt rigide tractandi*, Those that are scrupulous are not to be handled rigidly. When a mote is in the eye, it is not boistrously to be dealt withall; that will make it worse. The eye is a tender part, and so is the conscience. Again, we must take heed of offending weak consciences. It may be thou knowest thine own liberty, that

that thou mayst do this or that; but thy brother is vveak, and he doth not knowv it to be lavvfull: O take heed of giving offense: Consider the Apostles vvords, 1. Cor. 8. 12. *When ye sinne against your brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sinne against Christ.* Consider also the practice of the Apostle, and the resolution that he had; *If meat offend my brother, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth,* vers. 13. It is a grievous offense to offend the conscience of the vveak; and therefore bevvare of it. They are very unchristian speeches, *I know mine own liberty: If others be offended, what care I? Why should I prejudice my self for them?* It is true, another mans conscience cannot abridge me of my liberty: but yet I in charity ought to suspend the act of my liberty vvhen I knowv the using it vvill give offense to the vveak.

Use 4.

IV. To admonish our selves, if conscience be so tender a thing, to be carefull that we offend not our own consciences. Conscience is quickly offended; but it is not so soon pacified. Every notorious step into evil, or neglect in duty, offendeth conscience; and conscience will keep a grudge a long time, and vvill give many a secret wound, deadening the heart to duty, making faith and confidence in God dull: we cannot pray with courage, nor come before God with boldnesse. *If our hearts condemne us not, we have confidence,* saith John. An erroneous conscience will defile you; a doubting conscience distract you; a scrupulous conscience unsettle you: but above all other, an illlightened conscience, if it have any thing against you, will exceedingly disable

1. John. 3.
21.

able you ; this stabbeth at the heart your confidence towards God. Go then and labour to purge conscience, else conscience will hinder you ; whether you pray, or heare, or receive the Sacrament, &c. it will deprive you of comfort. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar : first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* The case is greater and more dangerous when conscience hath something against us : there is no offering will be accepted untill conscience be satisfied. If thou shouldst be about to pray, and conscience should stand up against thee as an adversary, and tell thee thou hast been vain, and loose, and carnall all this day, thou hast not set thy self to keep close to God this day, thou hast fallen into this and that sinne this day ; thou art not fit to pray till thou hast reconciled thy self to conscience : Alas, thy conscience will secretly undermine all thy praying. First, therefore reconcile conscience by humbling thy self, and breaking thy heart, and resolving, *I have sinned, I will do no more.* When conscience can say thy sorrow, and repentance, and resolution for new obedience is sincere, then thou art fit to pray, but not before. So whatever other duty thou goest about, be sure to reconcile conscience; else all will miscarry.

V. A faithfull conscience.

THUS I have expounded the adjuncts of conscience which shew themselves in the discharge of its duty, namely, such as respect consciences

science's ability to the doing of it : Which, as ye have heard, are foure : 1. an illightened conscience ; 2. an erroneous conscience ; 3. a doubting conscience ; 4. a scrupulous conscience. Now followeth those which do accompany it in the doing of its duty : And they are two : 1. a faithfull conscience ; 2. an unfaithfull conscience.

5. A faithfull conscience.

A faithfull conscience is that which doth alwayes advise and counsel aright when need is. This is a very rare conscience : It is rare to find a conscience every way faithfull. For, to say the truth, conscience is alwayes faithfull in it self ; for it knoweth not how to deal deceitfully with

Prov. 20. 6.

any man : but yet I may say, as Solomon, *A faithfull man who can find ? so, A faithfull conscience who can find ?* It is a very rare thing. Not for any deceit that is in conscience it self, but because men commonly would have it unfaithfull ; therefore a conscience that will not let men make it unfaithfull though they would, such a conscience I call a faithfull conscience : and I say it is rare. But such a conscience there is ; and it hath three properties : 1. It is watchfull ; 2. It is rigid and severe ; 3. It is importunate.

Properties :

1. It is watchfull.

1. A faithfull conscience is watchfull, alwayes awake to apprehend every opportunity of doing and receiving good, or resisting evil. As when there is an opportunity to pray, to heare, to shew mercie, a faithfull conscience will remember us of it, and put us upon it ; as also when there is any opportunity of quickning and edifying our selves or others. It was a watchfull conscience

that

that made David say, *I will never forget thy precepts*: that is, I will never omit any opportunity to remember them to do them. It was a watchfull conscience that made Paul say, *I became all things to all men, that by all means I might save some*; that is, by taking all opportunities and advantages to do good. It was a watchfull conscience that made Peter say, *I will not be negligent to put you alwayes in remembrance of these things*; that is, I will neglect no opportunity. Again, a watchfull conscience taketh notice of every motion and inclination to evil: it is awake to see when evil is conceived; to tell us of it, to oppose it, and to dissuade us from it: like a watchman on the top of a tower, alwayes awake to see when any danger approacheth. It is Gods minister with eyes on every side, to espie seasons of good, and stirre up to make use of them; and of evil, and give warning to avoid them.

2. As a faithfull conscience is watchfull, so also it is rigid and severe. In every cause it delivereth its judgement: nothing can escape its sentence: it will not favour our lusts in any particular. If there be any opportunity of duty to God or man, it maketh us to heare of it; though it be such a duty as none other will call upon us for, or it may be dare not put us in mind of; as of love, and care, and help towards inferiours; yet conscience will: It titheth mint and cumine, and will tell us of the least duty: And so on the other side, it will not swallow the least sinne. As it will not swallow a camel, so it will strain at a gnat: A faithfull conscience is faithfull in

2. It is severe.

Luke 15. 10.

the least. If David sinne but in the lap of a garment, conscience smiteth him for it. It made Abraham so precise to a thread or a shoe-latchet he would not take so much as that of the king of Sodom. It made Moses strict to a very hoof: It made Paul find fault with the Corinthians about their hair: It made Augustine condemne himself for an apple.

3. It is importunate.

3. As a faithfull conscience is watchfull and severe, so also it is importunate in all its counsels. It doth not onely deliver its judgement, but doth with importunitie urge the following of its counsel. It will have no nay, but will be obeyed. It leadeth us bound in the spirit to do it; as Paul *Acts 20. 22.* said, *I go bound in the spirit.* See how importunate this faithfull conscience was with the Psalmist: *Psal. 132. 4.* *I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, untill I find out a place for the Lord.* It will not take any nay, say we what we will: say we be sleepeie, say we be busie, say we be loth and full of excuses, it will be importunate, and that with vehemencie. It will follow a man, if he will not heare it, with a hue and crye of inward checks. It will sometime promise, sometimes threaten, urge us with hope, fear, danger, &c. *As we would be saved, we must do this; As we would escape the wrath to come, we must forbear that.* Thus importunate is a faithfull conscience.

Use 1.

I. We see here what a great blessing it is to have such a faithfull conscience, such a faithfull friend in our bosome, which will be carefull to tell us of all our dutie, and perswade us to it; and of every evil, and dissuade us from it. It will
not

not flatter us in any thing, but tell us plainly, *This ye should do; This ye should not do.* It regardeth not what pleaseth us; but what is good for us, that it looketh to, and that it perswadeth to, and that it urgeth. O what a blessing is this! This blessing had those willing Israelites who gave so freely and largely towards the building of the tabernacle. The text saith, that *their heart* Exod. 35. 21 *stirred them up, and their spirit made them willing.* Mark; *their heart* (that is their conscience) *stirred them up: Ye have bracelets; offer them*, saith conscience: *Ye have ear-rings and jewels, &c. part with them too*, saith conscience, *to further this pious work in hand. Their spirit made them willing*; their faithfull friend in their bosome, conscience, overcame them with arguments and strong perswasions. This is a great blessing, to have such a faithfull conscience: It will make a man part with all his lusts, pride, self-love, covetousnesse, carnall delights, for Gods glorie and our own true good.

II. It is a signe that God meaneth well to *Use 2.* that man to whom he hath given a faithfull conscience. O this is an Angel keeper indeed. Did not Christ mean well to his Church in the Canticles, when he gave her such a conscience as Cant. 6. 12 *carried her on wheels unto him? Or ever I was* 13. *aware my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib. Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return.* Return, return, saith conscience; and again, *Return, return.* Hath the Lord given thee such an importunate conscience as will have no nay, will not let thee alone in omitting good or committing evil, will not let thee

thee slumber and sleep in securitie, but continually joggeth and awaketh thee? Hath he given thee a severe, a precise conscience, that will not favour thee in the least evil? It is a most comfortable signe that the Lord meaneth well unto thy soul.

Use. 3.

III. Labour to be a friend unto conscience, that it may continue faithfull unto thee. True friends will deal faithfully and plainly one with another, and will be importunate to do one another good: Conscience will not deal thus with thee unlesse thou be a friend unto conscience. Now then are we friends unto conscience when we do what conscience requireth. As our Savi-

John 15. 14 our said to the Disciples, *Ye are my friends if ye do whatever I command you*: So I may say of conscience. For conscience if it be truly illighted will command nothing but what Christ commandeth. If we deal so in our constant course with conscience, be willing to hearken to it, and be ruled by it, then if we be out of the way now and then, conscience will be true to us, and be importunate with us for our good.

Use 4.

IV. Be sure thou stand not out against conscience when once it is importunate. It is a great sinne to stand out against conscience though it be not importunate; but it is a sinne a thousand times greater to stand out against it when it is importunate. The greatest standing out against conscience is the greatest sinne: it is a sinne which cometh nearest that against the holy Ghost, which accompanied with some other adjuncts is the greatest standing out against conscience. There is no sinne that doth more harden the

*Maxima
violatio con-
scientie est
maxime pec-
catum.*

the

the heart then to do evil when conscience is importunate to dissuade from it. This sinne was the cause why Saul was rejected of God ; *1 for- 1. Sam. 13. ced my self*, saith he : He forced his conscience ; ^{12.} his conscience was importunate to have him stay according to the commandment of God, but he forced himself to the contrary. I confesse, if conscience be importunate to the utmost, as it is with Gods children, men cannot with any force put it by , it will have no nay. Sometimes it is so with the wicked in some particular thing : but often conscience in them is importunate, and yet will suffer it self to be born down. Now to bear conscience down is a very high sinne, and exceedingly hardeneth the heart : therefore take heed of it.

V I. *An Unfaithfull conscience.*

THUS I have handled a faithfull conscience. ^{6. An unfaithfull conscience.} The second affection now followeth; which is an Unfaithfull conscience. I do not mean such an one as is overtaken with evil (for the best conscience hath its failings) but such a conscience as so giveth in that it suffereth a man to forsake God, and to serve the devil and his own lusts : This is an unfaithfull conscience ; and it also hath three properties : ^{Properties thereof;} 1. It is a silent conscience. 2. It is a large conscience. 3. It is a remisse conscience.

1. A silent conscience, that conscience which knoweth how to judge, how to counsel, how to direct, yet is silent and saith nothing. ^{1. It is silent.} is an unfaithfull conscience ; that knoweth what duties we owe to God and man, yet putteth us not upon

on them, nor is importunate for the performance of them ; and so for finnes, what we ought not to do, telleth not of the evil, dissuadeth not from it, urgeth not arguments to cause forbearance ; this is an unfaithfull conscience. It is like to a sleepy carelesse coachman, who giveth the horses the reins, and letteth them runne whither they will : So this unfaithfull conscience leaveth the reins on a mans neck, and letteth him runne whither he will, into any danger, any mischief, that he may *do evil with both hands*. Do ye not think Ahabs conscience was fast asleep, which let him sell himself to work wickednesse ? and so Manasseh's conscience ?

Mach. 7. 3.

2. It is large.

2. *Kings 10.*
29.

2. A large conscience ; vvhich maketh conscience it may be of some great duties, but taketh liberty in other vvhich it counteth lesser. Thus Doeg's conscience would not suffer him to break his vow, to depart on the sabbath day ; but yet it suffered him to accuse David. Jehu's conscience made him zealous in Gods cause against the house of Ahab and the priests of Baal ; but it suffered him to maintain the high places which Jeroboam had set up. Thus Gaimaliel's conscience made him speak well for Paul, and yet continue (it seemeth) in much other evil. This conscience will restrain from great staring finnes, or from such finnes as the man hath no naturall propensity unto : but others which seem of a lower nature, or vvhich are suitable to a mans particular desires, these conscience will swallow without remorse. As civil people, that cannot swallow down couzenage and injustice, and yet neglect of prayer and other religious duties never troubleth

troubleth them. And so some professors, who cannot omit hearing sermons and talking of religion, and yet can rest without the power thereof.

3. It is remisse; that is, though it doth counsel and direct, yet it doth it with such coldnesse and remissenesse that it is easily answered and put off. Thus it was with David. It cannot be thought but his conscience said, *Plot not against Uriah's life*: But he would; and so conscience let him do it. This conscience will be answered with every slight and idle excuse: As when conscience telleth one, *Your wayes are not good: I wish you to repent, and make your peace with God*; it may be the man answereth, *Yea, so I mean to do; but I cannot yet intend it: when I have dispatched such and such businesse then I will do it*. If conscience speak again, *Yea, but you were best to do it now*; True, saith he, *I know it, I know it. If God would give me repentance I would repent: It is his gift; of my self I cannot do it*. Or when it telleth him of family-duties, it may be he answereth, *I have no leisure; so long as I go to God by my self, I hope it will serve turn*. Or when it telleth him of his wickednesse, it may be he answereth, *Many worse then I have found mercy; and I hope so shall I*. This is the conscience that letteth a mans heart say, *I shall have peace*. Now conscience being remisse and cold, it is easily put off and answered with these idle and foolish excuses, or with some other pretences like these, and so letteth the man go and live as before. This conscience is like Eli, which said, *Ye do not well, my sonnes*, but exercised

3. It is remisse.

Deut. 19.39.

cised no severity to cause them to do otherwise.

Use.

By this we see the dangerous estate of those men who have such a conscience. There be many who live in many finnes, in carnall courses, some in company-keeping and drunkennesse, some in hatred and variance, some in chambering and wantonnesse, some in coverousnesse and love of this present world: your consciences, no question, can say, *Ye should do well to be more godly, to look more after Christ and after heaven, and ye should do well to get the truth of saving grace;* yet it may be they say nothing or nothing to the purpose in this behalf. Therefore is these mens case so dangerous because their consciences are so silent and so remisse. They have lost the most sovereigne remedy, namely conscience. Conscience is the most sovereigne means (under God and his holy Spirit) to work repentance in men that can be; and is it not dangerous to have it prove traiterous and unfaithfull? What good can the ministerie of the word do unto you when every idle and false excuse or pretense which the wisdom of the flesh can devise can stop the mouth of your conscience when it calleth upon you to do what the word requireth? It must needs be dangerous, and so much the more because it is so pleasing unto you: ye take delight in such silent, and large, and remisse unfaithfull consciences; ye love not to have your consciences too busie with you; ye like not that your consciences should be too clamorous and importunate with you; ye would have them not too rigid and vehement against your finnes. It

fareth

fareth with you as with many young men who have sold themselves unto folly, and think none their friends but parasites that flatter them, or those who connive and wink at their folly : but such friends will soon prove foes, and so will such moderate and quiet consciences. It is a dangerous thing to have such a silent conscience ; to want the chief means under God of doing a man good. It was conscience that told the lepers, *We 2. Kings 7. do not well to hold our peace* : It was conscience^d that never would let the prodigall sonne be quiet till he returned to his father, and said unto him, *I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy sonne* : It is conscience that is the most powerfull means under God to quicken a man up to repentance and obedience ; and therefore they are in a miserable case that want this great help.

But what are the causes why mens consciences *Quest.* be so evil and unfaithfull ?

The causes hereof are chiefly these foure : *Ans.*

1. Ignorance is one cause why a mans conscience is unfaithfull, when we do not labour to have conscience throughly illightened and informed. Who are more carelesse and negligent of their duties both to God and man ? who can with more freedome lye, steal, covet, sinne, &c. then those that are ignorant of the law of God ? They know not that they do so much hurt to their own souls as they do. An ignorant mind hath alwayes an evil conscience. It is impossible conscience should be faithfull where it is not illightened : and hence it cometh to passe that conscience is so negligent and unfaithfull, because

we

we have been so carelesse of informing it. Thy
 1. Pt. 2. 15. conscience must needs be silent as long as thou
 art ignorant. Ignorance is soon put to silence.

2. A second cause is often flighting of consci-
 ence. It may be conscience speaketh not, or but
 coldly and remissely, because when it hath ad-
 vised, and counselled, and admonished, thou hast
 neglected it and disregarded it from time to time.
 Though it judge and counsel, yet thou wilt not
 listen : Like Cassandra the propheteſſe, who
 though her predictions were true and certain, yet
 were they never believed : so though conscience
 speaketh true, yet men follow it not ; and there-
 fore it becometh silent when it is not regarded,
 but all its counsel, and advise, and perswasions
 flighted and neglected. Hence, I say, it cometh
 to passe that for want of imployment it is still
 and falleth asleep, till the time come that it must
 be awaked.

3. The third cause is that violence that is often
 offered unto it. Many times when conscience
 perswadeth to any good duty, or dissuadeth from
 any evil course, men will do against it and with-
 stand it violently, and put off the wholesome
 advise of it : hence it cometh to passe that con-
 science having so many injuries offered unto it,
 beginneth to provide for its own ease, and so ei-
 ther it is silent and saith nothing, or else is soon
 answered and rebuked ; as it was with Moses :
 When Pharaoh would never hearken unto
 Moses, but still fell to excuses, and at last to de-
 ny all, he would not let Israel go notwithstanding
 all that Moses could urge, but said to Moses
*Get thee from me ; take heed to thy self ; see my
 face*

face no more ; Moses then answered, Thou hast spoken well : I will see thy face no more. So it is with conscience ; When men have been obstinate, and have refused to heare it, and would have it speak no more, *Thou hast well spoken,* faith conscience : *henceforth I will trouble you no more, but let you alone to take your course : I will advise you no more ; or if I do, I will not be any more importunate.*

4. A fourth cause is, that men do wilfully stop the mouth of conscience : If it beginneth to speak, presently they busie themselves about other things ; or if that will not do, they runne into companie, and there spend their time, that the howlings of conscience may not be heard ; and if still it be loud, they strike up the drumme, and ring all the bells, that the voice of it may be utterly drowned: and so conscience at last is content to stand by, to heare and see and say nothing. By this means many times it falleth out that those who have had very turbulent and clamorous consciences not suffering them to be quiet, have at last tamed them and put them quite to silence ; or if they do speak, it is so coldly and remissely that they care not whether they be obeyed or no. Oh these are damnable and devilish devises ! Whoever ye be that do thus, ye are in a dangerous estate, and ye carry the brands of hell and damnation upon you. If ever you desire to avoid this dangerous estate, then shun the cause : Labour to have your conscience thoroughly illightned and informed by the word of God, that it may reade you your duty. A friend that knoweth but little can give but little counsel,

counsel. Again, give heed evermore to the counsel of conscience. You know Achitophel took it ill that his counsel was not followed; therefore he made away himself in displeasure: So conscience will take it very ill if its counsel be not followed: it will strangle it self, and smother it self; you shall heare no more of it. Especially take heed you do not reject conscience, nor offer violence to it: If you do, you will make it unfaithfull and remisse; and then you lose the best means under heaven of your good: Then deadnesse of spirit succeedeth, and hardnesse of heart taketh place, and you deprive your souls of all possibility of cure. As long as a sickman hath any possibility of cure he is still under hope; but if ever he lose that he is gone: Conscience is the possibilitie of the soul to amendment; and therefore if you dull conscience, and make conscience remisse and unfaithfull, you take the ready way to deprive your selves of all possibility of rising again. Consider these things, and have a care of your consciences.

And thus we have handled the office of conscience about things to be done and omitted, with its adjuncts, affections, and properties in that behalf. I come now to consider the office of conscience about things already done or omitted, together with the affections of conscience in the discharge of that office.

The office of conscience about things already done or omitted.

THis hath foure parts: 1. To approve; 2. To absolve; 3. To mislike; 4. To condemn.

demne, according to the good or evil of our actions or omissions. The judgement is not onely of the things, what they are; but whither they tend, and what they will produce.

I. *An approving conscience.*

First, when that vvhich is done is good, conscience approveth it: as Paul saith, *This is our rejoycing, the testimony of our conscience,* 2. Cor. 1. 12. When he had lived uprightly and sincerely, his conscience approved of it: so when he had great sorrow and heavinesse for his brethren, his conscience approved it; *my conscience bearing me witnessse,* saith he. So at his latter end we may see how his conscience approved the vvhole course of his life: *I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, &c.* there is consciences approbation of him: *from henceforth,* saith he, *is laid up for me a crown of righteousness:* there is consciences judgement concerning the issue of it. Conscience so approveth every particular good action done by a faithfull man, that by it he may gather a testimony of the uprightness of his heart: as Hezekiah; *Remember, Lord, that I have walked uprightly before thee. Hereby we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren.* Mark; Love to Gods children is a sufficient testimony not onely of our uprightness in that particular act, but also of the simplicity of our hearts in the generall, and that vve are translated from death to life. So when good old Simeon had now even finished his dayes, see what an approbation his conscience gave of him; *Lord,*

Luke 2. 29. now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. His conscience here gave a threefold blessed approbation of him. 1. That he had been Gods faithfull servant ; *thy servant.* 2. That he had walked in the wayes of true peace and comfort ; *depart in peace.* 3. That the promise of Gods word was his in particular ; *according to thy word.*

II. *An absolving conscience.*

THe second part of the office of conscience is to absolve and acquit. Thus Samuel pleading his innocency, had his conscience testifying for him, *Whose ox have I taken ? or whom have I defrauded ?* and his conscience absolved him as clear and free from those finnes. Thus also Job ; *If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherlesse, when I saw my help in the gate ; If I rejoyced because my wealth is great ; If I have not given my bread to the hungry ; or if I have rejoyced at the misery of mineemie : then let it be thus and thus to me.* His conscience absolved him as clear of those finnes. Nay, the conscience of a child of God doth not onely absolve him from the guilt of those finnes which he never committed, but also from the guilt of those finnes which he hath committed against God or against man. It can tell him he hath truly repented, and truly been humbled, and truly got pardon. Ye know David had committed divers finnes : yet when he had humbled his soul before God, and obtained pardon, his conscience telleth him as much and absolveth him, *Psal. 103. 3. Blesse the Lord, O my soul, &c. who forgiveth*

all thy finnes. Nay, though a child of God have many infirmities dayly and hourly, yet his conscience doth absolve him : *It is no more I that do it,* saith his conscience, *but sinne that dwelleth in me.* *If I distrust, it is no more I ; for I fight against it : If I be overtaken by any weaknesse, it is no more I ; for I laboured against it, and do bewail it.*

III. *A misliking conscience.*

THe third part of consciences office in things done is to mislike if we have done ill. There be imperfections in the best obedience of Gods dearest servants : *What I do I allow not*, saith Rom. 7. 15. Paul : His conscience misliked something done by him. But that mislike of conscience which now I speak of is of things that are ill done, that is, not done in truth and sincerity. Thus it is in all that are not renewed by the holy Ghost : The office of their conscience indeed is to mislike what they do : When they have prayed, their conscience can mislike it, and say, *I have not prayed with a heavenly mind, a holy heart* : When they have been at a Sacrament, conscience can truly mislike it, and say, *I have not been a fit guest at Christs table, &c.* When they are crossed and tempted, their consciences truly mislike their carriage, and say, *I do not fight and resist, but readily and willingly yield to every invitation to evil.* Do ye not think that Jeroboams conscience misliked his altering Gods worship, his innovating religion, his making Israel to sinne? do not ye think his conscience misliked him for these things? Do not ye think

think that Nabals conscience misliked his gripping? and Doegs conscience misliked his slandering? and Pashurs conscience misliked his opposing and misusing Jeremie? and the old prophets conscience misliked his lying? Who would have thought but Balaam said well, *Whatsoever the Lord saith unto me that will I speak*, and, *I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord to do lesse or more*; no, not for Balaks house full of gold; who would have thought but that this was well said? yet his own conscience could not choose but mislike it, being not spoken in sinceritie. Many a man hath gone for a Christian twentie or thirtie years, and every one liketh him; and yet it may be his conscience hath disliked him all the while.

IV. *A condemning conscience.*

Gen 3. 7.

THe fourth part of consciences office in this behalf is to condemne if we have done evil and contrarie to Gods law. Conscience hath an office not onely to mislike us but also to condemne us: nay, it will hasten more to condemne us then God. We see it in Adam: When Adam had sinned his conscience condemned him before God did: he knew he was naked, that he had made his soul shamefully naked; his conscience condemned him for an apostate before the Lord came to passe sentence upon him. Nay, it condemneth us oftner then God; God will condemne a sinner but once for all, *viz.* at the last day; but conscience condemneth him many thousand times before that. Many men and women who do seem godly in the worlds eyes, God knoweth

knoweth how many of them have condemning consciences in their bosomes, for all their civilities, and formalities, and crying God mercie, and patched up hopes; many who would say that man were uncharitable who should condemne them for such and such, who (it may be) find conscience within so uncharitable, and saying plainly, *Ye are so*; like the conscience of Pauls heretick, who is said to be *condemned of himself.* Tit. 3. 11.

I. This serveth for the praise of the justice of *Use 1.* God: That he may be just when he judgeth, the Lord needeth no other witness against us but our own consciences: they make way for the just judgement of God. Ye may see this in this portion of Scripture which we have in hand; wherein Rom. 2. 15. is shewed both that God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world, *vers. 16. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of all men according to my Gospel:* and then in the verse going before the Apostle sheweth that now in the mean while every mans conscience maketh way for this just judgement of God; *their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts in the mean time accusing or excusing one another.* At the last day every man shall be judged according to his conscience; a child of God according to his; a carnall man according to his. The Lord shall absolve all his children, and their own consciences shall absolve them. The Lord shall condemne all the rest, and their own consciences shall condemne them. This is the book that every mans life is set down in: Every passage of conversation both of the godly and the wicked is recorded dayly in this book: And according to what is written
G there

therein will the Lord judge every soul at the last day, as Rev. 20. 12. *The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book according to their works.* The Apostle there speaketh prophetically, and putteth the past time for the future; *they were judged*, that is, they shall be judged. So that ye see that by the judgement of conscience way is made for the just judgement of God.

Use 2.

II. This should be a means to keep us from sinne, and to keep us in a holy life : for according to our works so will be the evidences of our consciences, whether they be good or evil. We had need to take heed what we write in our consciences ; for according to what is written there so shall we be judged. Therefore if any sinne standeth upon record in our consciences, we had need get it blotted out by the blood of Christ. Repent, be humbled, beg for pardon, rest not till thou seest this debt-book conscience crossed, and thy sinnes stand there cancelled and discharged.

THUS I have shewed you the offices of conscience about things heretofore done. Now let me shew you the affections of conscience in the discharge of these offices. Ye have heard that conscience hath foure offices in things heretofore done ; 1. an office to approve ; 2. an office to absolve ; 3. an office to dislike ; 4. an office to condemn ; The two former when we have done well and lived well ; then the office of conscience is to approve and absolve : The two latter when we have done ill and lived ill ; then the office of conscience is to dislike and to condemn. Now followeth the affections of conscience in the discharge

discharge of these offices ; and they are foure : 1. A tender conscience ; 2. A sleepe conscience ; 3. A benumbed conscience ; 4. A seared conscience.

First, a tender conscience ; that is, a conscience touched with the least sinne, and checking us for the least sinne ; as for vain thoughts, exorbitant passions, idle words, and the like. Such was Davids conscience, which smote him for cutting off the lap of Sauls garment. Such was Zaccheus his conscience, which troubled him for supposed finnes : *If I have wronged any man*, saith he. He did not know ; but his conscience was so tender that it made him carefull of *Is*. This tender conscience is a singular blessing of God : And if we desire to attain unto it we must labour to see the odiousnesse of sinne, yea the malignity and exceeding evil there is in the least sinne : this will make us tender of it. Secondly, we must labour to mourn for every sinne though it seem little : this also will keep our consciences tender. And we have great cause to prize a tender conscience. What got the Bethshemites by not being tender in conscience ? They looked into the Ark, and because they durst venture upon it the Lord smote fifty thousand of them at once. What got the man that gathered sticks on the Sabbath for not being tender in conscience ? He was stoned to death. Conscience should tender the least commandment of God, and so be tender of the committing the least sinne. This conscience is a great blessing.

The second affection of conscience is sleepiness. A sleepe conscience is not so quick in smiting us as it ought : either it checks not, or else with such faintnesse that it worketh not upon us ;

1. A tender conscience.

1. Sam. 24. 5.

1. Sam. 6. 19.
Numb. 15.
32, 36.

2. A sleepe conscience.

it maketh us never the more watchfull against sinne. This we see by many who can commit such sinnes without trouble or disquiet as would bring others on their knees and make them walk heavily long after. This sleepey conscience is very dangerous: it maketh men as ready to fall into the same sinnes to morrow as to day, and next day as to morrow: it letteth them see their faults, but amendeth none; because this is such a conscience as doth not cause men to feel the burden of their sinnes. A man can never come to Christ as long as he hath a sleepey conscience; because it doth not cause sinne to be burdensome. They who have this conscience can sleep for all it, and eat and drink and be merry for all it: Now a man can never come to Christ that is not burdened with his sinne, that he cannot bear it, cannot be quiet for it, cannot sleep for it: then Christ calleth him, *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you.*

Math. 11.
28.

3. A benumbed
conscience.

A benumbed conscience; that is, such a conscience as is in a deep sleep. This differs from the former in degree. You know there is a lesse sleep, and there is a greater sleep: There is a lesse sleep, when onely the outward senses are bound; and there is a sleep when the inward senses are bound too. Now a benumbed conscience is a conscience that is in a deep sleep; Preach to it, it mourneth not; cry to it, it listeneth not: This is a benumbed conscience. Nor the greatnesse of sinne, nor the wrath of God denounced against it can move it. Men can know themselves guilty of such and such sinnes, and yet not lay them to heart:

heart : conscience never telleth them about it. Thus the Apostle speaketh of those *who knew the judgement of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, yet not onely do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them :* Rom. 1. 32. Their consciences though informed, and in some measure knowing the evil of their courses and the severitie of Gods judgement, yet let them go on still, and not onely commit the evil themselves, but delight to see others as bad as themselves. Such are our swearers, and drunkards, and company-keepers, &c. This is a very wretched conscience : the Lord deliver us from it.

Fourthly, a seared conscience ; that is, such a conscience as speaketh not a jote ; *seared with a hot iron*, as the Apostles phrase is, 1. Tim. 4. 2. a senselesse conscience, a past-feeling conscience : when men can swallow down sinne like drink, oathes, contempt of God, his word and worship, mockage of Gods servants, hating to be reformed ; such as sinne without any remorse. This kind of conscience is in foure sorts of men : 1. In dissolute and profligate persons ; who like common strumpets have their souls lie open to every sinne that cometh by. 2. In obstinate sinners, such as, like Ahab, have *sold themselves to work wickednesse in the sight of the Lord.* 3. In scoffers and jeerers ; who *speak evil of them who runne not in the same excesse of riot with themselves*, and nickname the godly. 4. In Apostates and backsliders ; who *speak lies through hypocrisie*, and have fallen from the profession of the truth : All these men have a conscience seared with a red-hot iron. This is a great judgement of God :

greater then this there cannot be : No outward judgement that can fall upon us is like unto it : not the plague, nor shame, nor beggery, no nor any curse besides hell it self is equall to it. By this the onely means under God of repentance is taken away. Such may come to repent ; but it is a thousand to one if ever they do. It is like a gravestone lying upon their consciences, which keepeth them under untill the day of judgement : at which time God will awaken their consciences, and then they will be more furious in tormenting then the very devils themselves.

Use.

Ye that are not yet fallen upon this wretched conscience, I beseech you take heed that ye never do. But ye will ask me, *How may we avoid it ?* Avoid it ? alas, ye may avoid it if ye be carefull : for conscience never feareth it self : If ever it be feared, it is ye your selves that do fear it. Indeed the mind of man may blind its own self ; and the heart of man may corrupt its own self ; and the affections of man may defile their own selves : but conscience never corrupteth it self, never feareth it self. But you will say, *What must I do to avoid this fearing of conscience ?*

First, listen to conscience well, that whatever it saith to thee from God thou maist do it. This was the course of the Psalmist ; *I will hearken what the Lord God will say in me* (so some translate it.) Heare then and listen what the Lord God will say in thee, what thy conscience illightened saith in thee, and do it.

Secondly, whenever this conscience is quick follow it. Nothing more feareth conscience then suffering quicknings to die. Blow the coles if they

they do but smoke. As the Apostle saith, *Quench not the Spirit* ; so quench not conscience.

I have hitherto shewed you that every man hath a conscience, and the reasons why God hath given us a conscience, the light that it acteth by, the offices of it, and the affections of it. Now from all these proceed two other adjuncts of conscience : 1. A quiet conscience ; 2. An unquiet conscience.

A quiet conscience.

CONCERNING a quiet conscience three things are to be considered: 1. What a quiet conscience is ; 2. How it differeth from that quiet conscience which is in the wicked; 3. The examination whether we have this quiet conscience or no.

I. For the first, What a quiet conscience is ; It is that which neither doth nor can accuse us, but giveth an honourable testimony of us in the course of our lives and conversations ever since we were regenerate (I put that in too : for 1. we do not begin to live till we be regenerate, and 2. we can never have a true quiet conscience till then.) Such a quiet conscience had good Obadiah ; *I fear the Lord from my youth*, saith 1. Kings 18. his conscience : This was a very honourable testimony that his conscience gave him. Such a quiet conscience had Enoch : *Before his translation he received this testimony, that he pleased God.* Haymo saith, this testimony was the testimony of Scripture, Die: me scrip- tura inquit ille. Gen. 5. 24. where it is said that he *walked with God*. This is true ; but this is not all : The text saith not there was such a testimony given

of him, but he had it : and that before his translation, but the testimony of Moses was after his translation : Therefore it was the testimony of his conscience that bore witness within that he pleased God. So that this is a quiet conscience, which neither doth nor can accuse us, but giveth an honourable testimony of us in the whole course of our life and conversation. Now to such a quiet conscience there be three things necessary : 1. Uprightnesse, 2. Puritie, 3. Assurance of Gods love and favour.

First, uprightnesse is when a man is obedient indeed. Many will be obedient, but they are not obedient indeed, not humbled indeed, not reformed indeed. What it is to be obedient indeed ye may see Exod. 23. 22. *But if thou shalt indeed obey his voyce, and do all that I shall speak, &c.* Mark ; that is obedience indeed when we do all that God speaketh, and are obedient in all things. This is an upright conscience, when the heart is bent to obedience in all things. An example we meet with in Paul ; *I have lived in all good conscience before God untill this day.* His conscience could not accuse him of any root of wickednesse and corruption allowed and cherished in him : That is an upright conscience. Hast thou such a conscience as this, *My conscience can truly bear witness there is no sinne I favour my self in, allow my self in, but condemne all, strive against all.* Thus David proveth that his conscience was upright ; *If I regard iniquitie in my heart, the Lord will not heare my prayer.* The regarding of any iniquity will not stand with uprightnesse.

A second thing required to a true quiet conscience is puritie. Though our heart be upright and stand generally bent to the Lords will, yet if we be guiltie of some particular sinne this will hinder the quiet of our conscience. Therefore saith Paul, *I know nothing by my self*; that is, 1. Cor. 4. 4. nothing to accuse me; no corruption, no root of unbelief reigning in him: Infirmities he had many, and frailties he had many, and he knew them, but he knew nothing to accuse him. Whatever was amisse in him, his conscience told him he used all holy means against it. If thy conscience can truly say thus also of thee, then hast thou a truly quiet conscience.

Thirdly, Assurance of Gods love, favour, and pardon. Though we have fallen into great sins, yet our consciences may have quiet if we can be truly assured of Gods love and favour in the pardon of them. The Apostle proveth that the *sacrifices* of the law could not *purge away sinne*; Heb. 10. 2. but onely Christs blood can do it. His argument to prove it is this, Because those sacrifices could not free a man from *having conscience of sinne*; they could not purge the conscience: but Christs blood can: After assurance of pardon in Christs blood conscience can no more condemne for sinne, how many or how great soever the sinnes were which have been committed. These are the three things required to a true quiet conscience.

Furthermore a quiet conscience implieth two things: 1. A calmnesse of spirit: 2. A chearfull, merry and comfortable heart. These two I mean when I speak of a quiet conscience.

1. A calmnesse of spirit, or a quietnesse of mind, not troubled with the burden of sinne nor the wrath of God, nor terrified with the judgments due unto sinne. This quietnesse and calmnesse of spirit is promised to all them that truly hearken unto Christ and obey him; *Who so hearkeneth to me shall be quiet from fear of evil.*

PROV. 1. 33.

2. A chearfull, merry and joyfull heart. When our conscience giveth a comfortable testimonie of us, it cannot but make our hearts joyfull. *This is our rejoycing, the testimony of our conscience,* saith Paul: The comfortable testimony which his conscience gave of him made him to rejoyce. A wicked man cannot truly rejoyce: no, though he be merrie and joviall and laugh, yet his carnall estate is a *snare*, he can have no true joy; *but the righteous sing and rejoyce,* Prov. 29. 6. No mirth like the mirth of a good conscience. All other joy is but outside, painted, seeming joy: That is onely true joy that is rooted in the comfortable testimonie of an upright good conscience, which telleth a man his peace is made with God, and that whether he be in sicknesse or in health God loveth him, *whether he live or die he is the Lords.* Thus ye see what a quiet conscience is.

2. COR. 1. 12.

How a quiet conscience in the godly differeth from the quiet conscience that is in the wicked

THE second thing propounded to be considered about a quiet conscience, is, How it differeth from that quiet conscience which is in the wicked, 1. I confesse that the wicked seem to have

have a very quiet conscience : Many thousands of carnall people seem to live and die in quiet. Look into alehouses, lewd houses, into all places ; who so merrie and brisk, and heart-whole (as they say) as they who have no saving grace? Yet 2. this quiet conscience in them must needs differ from the quiet conscience of the children of God. Certainly the Lord will not *give the childrens bread unto dogs* ; neither will he smile upon their souls ; neither doth he pardon the sinnes nor accept the persons of the ungodly : And therefore if they have a quiet conscience, it must needs differ from that in the godly. Must not copper needs differ from gold ? And we who are the Lords messengers must teach you the difference : *They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane.* Now the question is this, Wherein lieth the difference between the quiet conscience of the righteous and the quiet conscience of the wicked ? *Ans^w.* The difference between them lieth in foure things : 1. In the thing it self ; 2. In the cause ; 3. In the effect ; 4. In the continuance.

I. In the thing it self. The quiet conscience in the godly is double ; not onely apparentiall and nominall, but reall and substantiall : It is quiet and quiet too, peace and peace too : *I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace.* Mark; *peace and peace* too ; peace in appearance, and peace in truth and substance also. But the peace and quiet of conscience which the wicked have is not such peace : It is peace and no peace ; peace in appearance, but no peace in truth. Their god is

vers. 21.

is the god of this world, and he perswadeth them they have peace : But *my God*, saith the prophet, speaketh otherwise ; *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God*. They talk of a good conscience sometimes, and boast they have a good conscience ; but the truth is, they cannot have true peace within : for saith the prophet, *the wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*. So doth a wicked mans conscience secretly cast up mire and dirt in his face : His peace can onely be outward and apparentiall.

II. There is a difference in the cause. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from one cause, and the quiet of a bad conscience ariseth from another.

I. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from a distinct knowledge of the word of God, and of the precepts and promises contained in it: But the quiet of an evil conscience ariseth from ignorance : When men know not God nor his holy word, which should bind conscience, they fear nothing because they see nothing ; they know not the danger of sinne : Like a blind man standing before the mouth of a cannon, he feareth no danger because he seeth none : so carnall men fear not because they know not what cause they have to fear. Their very prayers that they make are *an abomination to God*, and they know it not : their good duties they do are all like *cockatrices eggs*, and they know it not; they know not that they are *in the bond of iniquitie, in the snare of the devil*. Their consciences are quiet because they know not what cause they have

have to be otherwise. This is one difference; The quiet and peace of a good conscience ariseth from light and from knowledge; the quiet and peace of an evil conscience, from darknesse and ignorance.

2. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth Heb. 10, 22; from a due examination of our selves by the word, and purging of our consciences. Conscience never can be good without purging and sprinkling; no nor without a due examination: the quiet of a good conscience ariseth from this. Whereas the quiet of a wicked mans conscience ariseth from want of this: He never examineth his conscience, but letteth it sleep till God awake it with horroure. I say, a wicked mans conscience sleepeth, and that maketh it quiet, and he is not troubled nor molested with it. Like a baillif or sergeant fallen asleep by the way; the desperate debtour whom he lieth in wait for may passe by him then, and find him very quiet, and not offer to arrest him: or like a curst dog fallen asleep; a stranger may passe by him then and not be meddled with: Such like is this quiet evil conscience.

3. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from a good ground, from the works of Gods Spirit, from true saving grace, from righteousness. Rom. 14. 17. we reade of *righteousnesse and peace*: True peace of conscience ariseth from righteousness: Whereas the false peace of the wicked ariseth onely from vain hopes and conceits; *They are not guiltie of such and such great sins; or, They are not so bad as some others:* As the Pharisee's conscience was quiet; why?
God

God, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, no drunkard, extortioner, nor like this publicane. Or perhaps from this ground their peace ariseth; *The Lord is very mercifull*; and, *The Lord Jesus died for sinners*. Or perhaps this is their plea, *They are good comers to church*; *They have prayers in their families*; *They have been professours of Christ Jesus so many years*: From hence they dream of peace upon false grounds, whenas *the way of peace they have not known*. When conscience shall be awaked, then it will tell them how they have by flattery deceived their own souls, and that having no true righteousness they could have no true peace.

4. The quiet of a good conscience ariseth from tenderneffe and from life. Therefore the Apostle joyneth together, *life and peace*, Rom. 8. 6. True peace of conscience ariseth from life: whereas the quiet of a wicked conscience ariseth from searednesse and benumbednesse and deadnesse, when men being past feeling of sinne are not troubled at the committing of it. Thus ye see the second thing wherein the difference lieth, namely in the cause.

III. They differ in the effect. First, The effect of the quiet of a good conscience is comfort and rejoycing: *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. What followeth? *By whom we have accessse by faith, rejoycing, &c.* Mark; The peace of conscience bringeth forth rejoycing. And so in other places *peace and joy* are joyned together. But the evil conscience, though quiet, wanteth this rejoycing. If carnall men had no more mirth
then

Rom. 5. 1.

Rom. 15. 13.
Gal. 5. 22.

then what the quiet and peace of their consciences doth help them to, they would not be so merrie as most of them be. Secondly, Another effect of true peace of conscience is, It sanctifieth the soul, it purgeth the heart, purifieth the life, and reformeth the whole man. It is the instrument whereby God sanctifieth his people more and more : *The God of peace sanctifie you wholly.* Observe the title which the Apostle there giveth unto God when he sanctifieth his people, he calleth him *the God of peace* ; he sanctifieth his people by peace : It maketh them think thus, *We must not do thus or thus as others do ; we shall lose the peace of our conscience if we do.* This maketh them strive against sinne, denie their own wills and carnall appetites ; *If I should not do so I should have no peace.* This peace sanctifieth : But the peace which carnall men seem to have doth not sanctifie the soul : they are never the more holy for the same. Again, another effect of the peace of a good conscience is, to put life into us in the performance of good duties : it maketh us with gladnesse and delight perform the duties of our generall and particular callings : But the false peace of an evil conscience suffereth the wicked to be dead and dull to good duties. The true peace keepeth our hearts and our minds : We should lose our minds in the things of this life, but this peace doth keep them upon God ; we should lose our hearts upon our profits and pleasures and affairs in the world, but the peace of conscience doth keep them upon heaven : Phil. 4. 7. *The peace of God which passeth all understanding*

ing, shall keep your hearts and minds. This doth the peace and quiet of a good conscience : but the quiet of a wicked mans conscience doth not do thus ; it keepeth not his mind in this manner, but it is upon earthly things for all that.

IV. They differ in respect of duration and continuance. The quiet of a good conscience is settled and grounded in the godly ; it never faileth them nor forsaketh them : the other peace is fading. Let a feeling sermon come and ruffle carnall men, it taketh away their peace from them ; their consciences then flie in their faces, and then they see they are not right : Let losse of outward things come and light upon them, or any other affliction, it taketh their peace from them ; conscience then breaketh out upon them and sheweth them how they have deceived themselves with false peace, especially at their death, then an evil conscience (that hath been quiet before) in stead of comforting will affright and amaze them. But if we have the quiet of a good conscience, it will make us heare the word with comfort, and not be troubled and disquieted by a searching sermon or the threatnings of Gods judgements : Nay, if we be in trouble, this will quiet us ; if in affliction, this will comfort us : It will endure all our life, and be present at our death ; then especially it will shew it self a friend unto us, in standing by us to chear and refresh us. *Great peace have they which love thy law, & nothing shall offend them,* saith David : nothing shall offend them or take away their peace : it is an eternall and everlasting peace. Thus you have seen how the true and false peace of conscience differ.

But

But here cometh a question to be answered, & it is this; Have all Gods children this peace of conscience? I dare say some of you look for this question, and long to have it answered. I answer therefore, No; they have it not alwayes. Job seemed one while not to have it: *I have sinned*, saith his conscience: *what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men.* David seemed one while not to have it: *Mine iniquities are gone over my head as a heauey burden; they are too heauey for me*, Psal. 38. 4. His sinnes lay heauey upon his conscience for a fit. Hezekiah one while seemed not to have it: *Behold, for peace I had great bitternesse.* And therefore I say the children of God have it not alwayes. But let me tell you; They might have it alwayes.

1. It is possible they should have it alwayes: Their sinnes of ignorance and infirmitie do not break the peace of their consciences: cannot; for if they could, then no man should have true peace of conscience at any time. Nothing but willing and witting sinnes, sinnes against conscience, can break the peace of conscience: and as it is possible for the children of God to live without these, so it is possible for them alwayes to have peace; yea, they may have daily more and more peace.

2. As it is possible for the children of God alwayes to have peace, so they are commanded to keep their peace alwayes; and it is their own fault if at any time they lose it: *Acquaint thy self with God, and be at peace*, Job. 22. 21. saith Eliphaz. So, *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which ye are called.* We are not onely commanded to have peace in our

hearts, but also that it may *rule* there, that no corruption perk over it to hinder it : we are *called* to this peace, and commanded to have it; and therefore as it is a sinne in the commonwealth when one breaketh the peace, so it is a sinne in the spirit to break the peace of conscience: we are all bound to the peace. 3. If the children of God have it not alwayes, then they feel the want of it : and in the want of that comfort nothing else will comfort them. It is not all the peace and prosperitie of the world that can comfort their hearts as long as they have not this peace ; not all the mirth in the world can content them untill they enjoy this peace again, the peace and quiet of a good conscience : they faint for it, and long after it, they can have no

Psal. 29. 11. strength without it; *The Lord will give strength unto his people ; the Lord will blesse his people with peace.* It is not so with corrupt hearts: they can be without peace, and yet never faint ; they can eat and drink for all that, and sleep and be merry for all that, yea and go about their profits and their earthly busineses as roundly as ever for all that : But the children of God if they want the peace of conscience, they have no strength to do any thing almost, they faint till they have it again. 4. The godly alwayes have the seeds of it in them : *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladnesse for the upright in heart.* Mark ; it is sown in their hearts, and it will spring up at one time or other to chear them and to comfort them. As it is with the wicked ; they may seem now and then to have true peace, but they have the seeds of horreur alwayes

alwayes in them, which will sprout forth at last, and then they shall find the worm of an evil conscience again : so on the contrarie side, the godly may seem now and then to have no peace, but yet they have alwayes the seeds of true peace in them, which will in time shew themselves, and solace their souls for ever.

5. They never want peace as the wicked do want it : The wicked want it, and have no possibility of having it : they go in such *paths* as wherein they shall never *know peace*, such paths as will *Isai. 59. 8.* never lead them unto it : still their conscience is able to say, they are not right, they are carnall and not spirituall ; they know no true peace of conscience, neither can they : But the children of God walk in such wayes as will bring them to true peace of conscience ere they have done.

By this ye see what a good and quiet conscience is. It cannot be but that all must like it, and wish, *O that we had it !* Beloved, let us labour to get it and the assurance of it. No blessing under heaven is like it: It is a heaven upon earth. Happie are they who can shew they have it : and miserable are they who have it not. *Dulce nomen pacis*, Sweet and pleasant is the very name of peace, especially of the peace of a good conscience : If ye have it, no misery can make you miserable : and if ye have it not, no happinesse can make you happie. It is Christs legacy which he bequeathed to his Church ; *Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you.* It is glorious and honourable : Beeft thou never so mean in the world, thou art glorious if thou hast this peace : beeft thou never so despised and

disgraced among men, thou hast honour enough if thou hast this peace: Rom. 2. 10. *To every one that doth good, glory and honour and peace.* Mark how it is accompanied; namely, with glory and honour: But shame and confusion and dishonour is upon all them that have it not.

III. *Examination, Whether we have a quiet conscience.*

CONCERNING a quiet conscience I propounded three things: 1. What it is; 2. How it differeth from that quiet conscience that is in the wicked; 3. The examination whether we have this quiet conscience yea or no. The two former we have handled already: namely, What a quiet conscience is; and, How it differeth from that quiet conscience which is in the wicked. Let us passe on now unto the third, namely, to an examination of our selves whether we have a true quiet conscience yea or no.

A quiet good conscience is such a marvellous blessing that it cannot possibly be but we must like it and wish, *O that we had it.* Let us then examine our selves and see whether we have it or no. Many have peace and quietnesse (as hath been shewed already) arising from false grounds: they have peace of conscience because they know not what belongeth to trouble of conscience; or if they know that a little (as some of the wicked do) yet they do not consider that sorrow which one day will burst in upon them and sink them utterly: Let us trie then our peace by these notes.

I. If the quiet of our consciences be good, it is such

such as we have carefully sought for at the mercies of God in the blood of Jesus Christ, when being pinched with the burden of our sinnes we did fly to the promises of God to seek comfort, to the blood of Christ, to find ease and to get assurance of Gods favour. If our peace come not this way, it is naught, and we were better to be without it then have it. It may be we speak peace to our selves; but doth the Lord speak peace to our consciences? *I will heare what the Lord will speak: for he shall speak peace to his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly* (for that will break all their peace.) O go to God then, and heare whether he speaketh peace to your consciences; whether it be *God in Christ reconciling the world to himself* that speaketh it to you. It is not true peace without we have sought for it at the throne of grace, without it be peace of Gods making. Now the Lord speaketh peace to his people who come to him for peace three wayes. 1. He speaketh peace to them by his word. This speaking is thus; When the word promiseth peace to those who walk by such a rule, and they walk by that rule, then Gods word speaketh peace to their souls. The rule is set down Gal. 6. 15. *In Christ, Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature: and then followeth, As many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them.* 2. God speaketh peace to his people in their consciences. This speaking is thus; When the conscience can say, *I am in Christ, I am engrafted into Christ,* then the Lord speaketh peace by the conscience.

20. Pet. 3. 14. *peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus : so also when the conscience can say, I hunger after righteousness, I truly mourn for sinne, I desire in all my wayes to please God. Thirdly, God speaketh peace by his Spirit. This speaking is thus ; When the word hath spoken peace by the promise, and when the conscience speaketh, I am thus and thus qualified, and therefore I have peace, then the Spirit of God cometh in and witnesseth, Yea, you say right ; peace belongeth unto you indeed, and I say Amen to it. When the Spirit of God doth say thus, then the Lord*
 Gal. 5. 22. *speaketh peace to the soul. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. Peace is the fruit of the Spirit: it speaketh it to the soul, breedeth it in the soul. Now, beloved, examine your selves : Is your peace of this stamp ? do ye seek it of God, and get it in the bloud of Christ Jesus ? do ye get it by the word, and by your truespeaking conscience, and by the holy Spirit of God ? If ye get it on this wise, then it is true peace of conscience indeed. If ye get it by your own vain hopes and by your good meanings, &c. this peace will not hold alwayes: when your consciences come to be awaked, your peace will all vanish away and be no more. This is the first note to try and examine your selves by.*

II. If our quiet and peace of conscience be good, it is accompanied with such a life as is agreeable to the will of God : it avoideth sinne, as the thing that disturbeth the peace. How can any man have true peace of conscience when his life doth not please God but provoketh his wrath against him ? It cannot be that he should have
 true

true peace who in his heart doth regard sinne :
There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God.
 No, whereever true peace of conscience doth inhabit, it dwelleth with godlineſſe of life and unblamableneſſe of converſation ; as the Apoſtle Peter joyneth them together, 2. Pet. 3. 14. *Wherefore, beloved, ſeeing ye look for ſuch things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without ſpot and blameleſſe.* Mark the words ; *In peace, without ſpot and blameleſſe.* If ever we would be found in true peace, we muſt live without ſpot and blameleſſe. A wicked mans conscience may ſeem to have peace, and tell him he hath ſerved God ; *This day I have paid my* Prov. 7. 14. *vowes,* ſaith the conscience of the whore : but this is a rotten and deceitfull peace. True peace of conscience is ever accompanied with ſuch a kind of life as is agreeable to the will of God in his word.

III. If our peace be good, it will make us endure to heare any point in Gods word with joy and delight. A wicked heart can heare points of mercie and comfort with joy : ſo long his peace laſteth : *Every man that calleth upon the name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved ; If we confeſſe our ſinnes, God is juſt to forgive us our ſinnes ; If any man ſinne, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous ; Whoever ſhall confeſſe that Jeſus is the Sonne of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God:* Such points as theſe a wicked heart can reade with delight (though if they were truly opened and expounded they would yield him cold comfort, yet he can heare them with delight in the lump :) But if a

searching point or some terrible point cometh, he is afraid to heare that. Ahab had a quiet conscience but onely when Michaiah did preach : Felix had a quiet conscience no doubt ; yet he *trembled* to heare Paul preach of *death* and of *judgement*, Acts 24. 25. One would have thought that Paul (a prisoner) should rather have been afraid : but Paul had true peace of conscience, and therefore he could think and speak of death with great comfort, and of judgement with joy ; So could not Felix. Beloved, this is a strong signe of a false peace, when some points of Gods word lay us flat and bereave us of our hold. Ye shall have many say, *O they have such peace, and they have such a good conscience, as quiet as can be, and as heartwhole as can be* : By and by a sound searching point cometh and ransacketh them to the quick, and they are gone. I confesse they go and get some untempered morter or other, and dawb up their consciences again; but they are gone for the time. This is a strong signe of a rotten peace. But a child of God can heare any point, heare of death, of judgement, of any thing contained in the word, with delight and comfort. It is true, he may be amazed thereat : but he is glad at heart that he heareth it, and will make use of it, be it mercy or judgement. Sweet or bitter points all are welcome to him : even the bitterest points are sweet to him, because God and he are at peace; and therefore he knoweth there is no news from God but it is good.

IV. If our peace of conscience be good, it will heal that base fearfulness which is in many: who dare

dare not be in the dark, dare not go through a church-yard in the night. Some will quake at the very shaking of a leaf, as the wicked in Job: *Job 15. 21.* which is nothing but a guiltie conscience. I grant this fearfulness is naturall to some; yet I say the true peace of conscience will cure it. I do not say this is a reciprocall signe of true peace of conscience; for many wicked men may be bold enough: but I say true peace of conscience will cure this immoderate fearfulness in the godly.

But here two questions are to be asked. I. Whether every true child of God that hath true peace of conscience can think of death with comfort and be desirous to die.

Ans. 1. Peace of conscience doth not take away naturall fear. It is the nature of every living creature to be very fearfull of death. The Philosopher calleth death *φύσις φόβηται*, *the fearfullest thing of all fearfull things.* Bildad calleth it *the king of terrors.* Nature loveth *Job 18. 14.* its own preservation; and therefore feareth the destruction of it. Peace of conscience doth not take away all this fear. 2. Besides, peace of conscience doth not take away alwayes all degrees of slavish fear of death. The reason is, because peace of conscience may be weak, mixed with much troubles of conscience. For as faith may be very imperfect, so peace of conscience may be in some very imperfect. Good old Hilarion was very fearfull to die: He cried out to his soul when he lay on his death-bed, *O my soul, hast thou served Christ these fourescore years, and art thou now afraid to die?* Again, a mans love may be very imperfect. *Perfect love indeed cast-*
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1. Job 4. 18.

2. Kings
20. 3.

eth out fear ; but imperfect love doth not. Hezekiah had peace of conscience: *Remember Lord,* saith he, *I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.* Mark ; He had the peace of a good conscience ; his conscience told him he had a sincere heart, and that his wayes pleased God : yet he was afraid to die : I do not think it was onely because he had no issue, though that might be some reason of it. 3. When a child of God is afraid to die, it is not so much for love of this life as out of a desire to be better prepared.

Psal. 39. 13. This made David cry out, *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be*

Job 10. 20, 21. *no more.* And so Job ; *Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return.* These good men were then something unwilling to die : They might have many reasons ; most likely this was one, That they might be better prepared, and more fit and ready for their departure. 4. Some of Gods people ; as these, Job and David, at other times ; I say, some of Gods people have such marvellous peace with God as that if it were Gods will they had

Phil. 1. 23. much rather die then live ; *I desire to be dissolved,* saith Paul, *and to be with Christ ; which is farre better.* It may be in regard of the church, or the care of their children and charge God hath laid on them, they could be content to remain still in the body : neverthelesse, they account their state after death much better ; and, were it put to them whether to die or to live longer here, they would choose death rather of the twain. Nay, Elias requested for himself that he might die : *It is enough, Lord : take away*

1. Kings
19. 4.

my

my life. Not that they love death it self; for death is evil in its own nature, contrary to nature, a badge of sinne: but for the love they have to and the assurance they have of eternall life after death. 5. Nay there is no child of God but may truly be said to love death, and to love the day of judgement and the appearing of Christ Jesus. Divines use to put this as a signe of Gods children: Nay, the Apostle maketh this as a propertie of Gods children, *to love Christs appearing: I have fought a good fight,* saith Paul, *I have finished my course:* There he telleth us of his own peace; and then he telleth us of his reward; *From henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me in that day; and not to me onely, but to them also that love his appearing:* that is, to all his children: For all the children of God love the appearing of Jesus Christ to judgement. Though all do not desire it with the same strength of faith, yet all desire it with faith. They believe that Christ hath destroyed him that hath the power of death, which is the devil; they believe Christ hath taken away deaths sting, which is sinne, and swallowed death up in victory; and may all say, *Thanks be unto God who hath given us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Neither do they so much question this as their faith to believe it; saying, *Lord, help our unbelief.* 6. Gods children have good reason to do so, and to check their own hearts whenever they do otherwise. Whenever any distrust cometh, they should check it down again: whenever any fear ariseth, they should say,

2. Tim. 4. 8.

Heb. 2. 14.

1. Cor. 15. 56, 57.

say,

Psal. 116. 15. say, What? I fear death? which is a thing so precious? Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints. Is death precious, and shall I be so vain as to fear it? Thus ye see an answer to the first question, Whether every child of God that hath true peace of conscience can be desirous to die.

II. *Quest.* Whether a wicked man that hath no peace of conscience may not be desirous to die too? *Answ.* 1. The horreur of conscience may make a wicked man desirous to die. He may have so much horreur of conscience as that he may think certainly hell cannot be worse: (Hell is infinitely worse; but he may not think so.) *Math. 27. 5.* Thus Judas was desirous to die, when he went and hanged himself: Thus many in despair do make away themselves. I confesse some in despair may be fearfull to die: as Cain was fearfull to die; it was fear of death made him speak thus unto God, *It shall come to passe that every one that findeth me shall slay me, Gen. 4. 14.* The reason was, because, though he were in despair, yet he was not so sensible of his horreur as Judas was: for Cain could go and build for all this, and train up his children in musick and the like for all this; but Judas was in a case more sensible of his misery. 2. Dolour of pain may make a wicked man desire to die. Thus it was with Saul: Saul had received his deaths wound, and was in most grievous pain: he could not die presently, neither could he live; but lying in very great pain between both, desired the Amalekite to stand upon him and slay him, 2. Sam. 10. 9. (though Osiander think
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the Amalekite lyed unto David to curry favour with him ; but Josephus and others think he spake the truth.) Sure it is, that many wicked wretches having no peace of conscience to sweeten and allay their torments , have been desirous to die : nay some have hastened their own death. 3. Malecontentednesse, & shame, and disappoyment of their aims may also make wicked men desirous to die, and, if death come not soon enough of it self, to dispatch away themselves with cruel self-murder. Thus it was with Achitophel : when he saw his counsel was not followed he haltered himself : He had no peace of conscience to comfort him against all his dumps and discontents ; and therefore he was desirous to die. 4. Wicked men , being vexed at something for the present, may seem to be desirous to die ; and yet if death should come indeed, they would be of another mind, and be content death should be further off. Nay, Jonas (that strange man of a good man) O for a fit he would be dying, yea that he would , *Lord, take my life from me : for it is better for me to die then to live.* I suppose if God had taken him at his word, he could have wished his words had been in again. But thus it is often in the mouthes of wicked people ; *I would I were dead ; and, I would I were out of the world :* not for any peace of conscience they have, nor for any desire of death, but onely for a momentary pang. If they were to die indeed, they would be loth enough to it. Like the man in the Fable : who being wearied with his burden of sticks , lay down and called for Death ; but when Death came

2. Sam. 17.

22.

Jon. 4. 3.

came indeed to take him, and said, *What shall I do, man? thou calledst me: I pray thee*, said he, *help me up with my burden of sticks*. When he was to die indeed, then he would rather have his own wearisome burden. It is but a fable; but this is the fashion of many. 5. When wicked men are desirous to die indeed sometimes not out of discontent or any such like reason, yet it cannot be out of any true peace of conscience: They may go away like lambs, as we say; but it is in a fools paradise. It may be whilst they lived they thought to go to heaven; but *when they dy, then all their thoughts perish*, as the Psalmist speaketh in another case.

To return therefore where we left; O beloved, is there any of you that want the peace of a good conscience? and do ye know what you want? what a great benefit and blessing? That ye may see this, and fully know it, and by knowing it earnestly desire it, consider,

First, that it is the very head of all comforts. A worthy Divine calleth it *Abrahams bosome to the soul*: Ye know what a blessing it was unto Lazarus to be taken from his sores into Abrahams bosome: The peace of a good conscience is like this bosome of Abraham: Who would not gladly lie in it? Such a man who hath it can never look upon another mans comfort, but a good conscience will say, *Yea, and I have my comfort too*. When Paul was commending of Timothy, see how his own conscience spake of himself at the same time: *He worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do*. Mark; his conscience would be putting in comfort for himself: *Doth Timothy*

Timothie work the Lords work? yea and so do I too, saith his conscience: It is Musculus his observation upon the place.

Secondly, A quiet conscience maketh a man to tast the sweetnesse of things heavenly and spirituall: It maketh the word to be to him, as to David, *Sweeter then hony, yea then the hony-combe: I have not departed from thy judgments, O Lord.* saith he (thus saith his conscience:) now what followeth next? *How sweet are thy words unto my tast? yea, sweeter then hony unto my mouth.* Psalm. 119. 103. A good conscience maketh a man tast sweetnesse in prayer, when his conscience telleth him he prayeth aright: It maketh him tast sweetnesse in a Sabbath, when his conscience telleth him he sanctifieth it aright: so also in the sacrament, when his conscience can witnesse he receiveth aright. What is the reason so few of you tast sweetnesse in these things? The reason is this; Because ye have not the peace of a good conscience: It would find sweetnesse in every good dutie, in every good word and work.

Thirdly, A good quiet conscience maketh a man tast sweetnesse in all outward things, in meat, in drink, in sleep, in the company of friends: it putteth a *Better* upon a very morsel, Prov. 17. 1. Brown bread and a good conscience, there is a *Better* upon it then upon all the costly fare of the wealthie without it. Bernard calleth a good conscience a *soft pillow*: Another calleth it a *dear bosome friend*: Solomon calleth it a *continuell feast*. It maketh a man tast sweetnesse in every outward thing. The healthy man
only

only can take pleasure in recreations, walks, meats, sports, and the like : they yield no comfort to those that are bedrid, or sick, or half-dead. But when the conscience is at peace the soul is all in good health ; and so all things are enjoyed with sweetnesse and comfort.

Fourthly, It sweetneth evils to a man , as troubles, crosses, sorrows, afflictions. If a man have true peace in his conscience , it comforteth him in them all. When things abroad do disquiet us, how comfortable is it to have something at home to chear us ? so when troubles and afflictions without turmoil and vex us and adde sorrow to sorrow, then to have peace within, the peace of conscience, to allay all and quiet all, what a happinesse is this ? When sickness and death cometh, what will a good conscience be worth then ? Sure more then all the world besides. If one had all the world, he would then give it for a peaceable conscience. Nay, what think ye of judgement and the tribunal of Christ ? Do but think what a good conscience will be worth then ? When Paul was accused and hardly thought of by some of the Corinthians, this was his comfort ; *I know nothing by my self, saith his conscience : I count it a very small thing to be judged of you.* Nay, he goeth further : His conscience telleth him he *hath the Lord Jesus* (who justifieth him) *to judge him;* he hath a sweeter Judge then his own conscience, even his Saviour, to judge him. O there is no created comfort in the world like the comfort of a peaceable conscience. The heathen Menander could say, *ἡγερέῃς ἀναστὶς οὐρανίου*

— 1. Cor. 4. 3, 4.

Gods Conscience is a little pettie god. We may not give it such a big title : but this is most certain ; The conscience is Gods echo of peace to the soul : in life, in death, in judgement it is unspeakable comfort.

Is there any then that want this ? Let them *Exhortation* above all things labour to get it : It is more worth then all things else. Whatever we neglect, let us not neglect this. It is safer to neglect bodie, health, means, maintenance, friends, and all that ever we have in the world then to neglect this. The more we have the worse it is for us, if we have not this. Had we all this worlds good, it is like a stone in a serpents head or a toads head, or a pearl in an oyster; not our perfection but our disease.

Again, you who have a peaceable conscience.

1. Labour to maintain it. Be often in communion with God, be not strangers to him, the light of whose countenance is the peace of your souls. It is the walking with God that breedeth true peace and preserveth it. It is said of Levi, that *he walked with God in peace.* O let us *Mal. 2. 6,* stirre up our selves to walk close with God, that so we may have peace : No sweet peace but in so doing.
2. We must take heed we do not trouble nor disquiet it, that we do not resist it, or offer violence unto it by committing sinne against the peace of it, but endeavour to maintain the peace of it by obeying the voyce of it. Get the fear of God, which is wisdom ; and to depart from evil, which is true understanding : *All her paths are peace,* Prov. 3, 17. We cannot walk in any one path of true wisdom but

we shall find in it peace : There is peace in humilitie, and peace in charity, and peace in godlinesse, and peace in obedience, &c. Break any of these things, and ye break the peace. Ye heare what an admirable thing the peace of conscience is : O then, if ye have it, make much of it : nay, if ye have it, ye will for certain make much of it. The very having of it will teach you the worth of it, and learn you to prize it, and make you above all things unwilling to leave it. And thus much of the first, *viz.* a quiet conscience.

An unquiet conscience.

I Have already handled a quiet conscience. I come now to speak of a troubled and unquiet conscience : Concerning which I shall shew you three things : 1. What it is ; 2. The degrees of it ; 3. The difference of the trouble that may be in a good and that may be in a bad conscience.

What it is

I. What a troubled conscience is. It is a conscience accusing for sinne, and affrighting with apprehensions of Gods wrath. And here I would have you consider two things : 1. What are the causes of it ; 2. Wherein it consisteth.

Lev. 5. 4.

First, The causes of it are these five. 1. The guilt of sinne : When a man hath done evil, and his conscience doth know it, then doth the conscience crie guiltie : *when he knoweth it, saith the text, then he shall be guilty.* This is it which woundeth and pierceth conscience ; this is the sad voyce of conscience. Like Judas ; *I have sinned in betraying the innocent blood :* Like Cain ;

Cain; *My sinne is greater then can be forgiven.* So the brethren of Joseph; *We are guilty, say,* Gen. 42. 21. *they, concerning our brother.* It is like the head of an arrow sticking in the flesh, or like a dreadful object continually presenting it self before our eyes: *My sinne is ever before me,* saith Psal. 51. 3. David. When we have transgressed Gods law, and our conscience can cry guiltie, when the guilt of sinne lieth upon conscience, this is one cause of the trouble of it.

2. Another cause is the apprehension of Gods wrath for sinne: When knowing that we have sinned and offended God, we apprehend his wrath in our minds, and behold the revenging eye of his justice against us. This is a very grievous thing, so terrible that no man or angel is able to abide it: As we see the kings and potentates, the mighty men of the earth, *call for the mountains to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of God,* Rev. 6. 15, 16. When we have incurred Gods displeasure and our consciences see it, when his anger resteth upon us and our consciences feel it, this is another cause of the trouble of conscience.

3. A third cause of the trouble of conscience is the fear of death and of hell: When we know we have offended Gods law, and we know also what our sinnes do deserve, namely death and judgement aad damnation for ever; this doth most trouble and disquiet conscience, when it fastneth on the apprehension of it. The Apostle calleth it *a fearfull looking for of judgement,* When conscience looketh for nothing else but for hell and damnation, this must needs trouble conscience.

4. Another cause is privative, want of supportance ; when God doth withhold from conscience the help of his Spirit. Ye know the Spirit can inable conscience to undergo all its troubles; the Spirit can prompt it with mercies and the promises of God, and hold it up : but when the Lord bereaveth the conscience of this help, and doth not at all support it, this must needs also trouble conscience.

5. When God doth fasten on the conscience such thoughts as may affright and terrifie it ; as thus, *God doth not love me ; Christ will not own me ; I have sinned, I am a reprobate, past hope, &c.* When such thoughts as these fasten on the conscience, it cannot choose then but be troubled. Thus I have shewed you what are the causes of the trouble of conscience.

Secondly, This trouble of conscience consisteth in two things : First, in want of comfort : It cannot apply to it self neither the promises of this life nor of that which is to come. Conscience crieth, *This belongeth not to me : This mercy, this comfort is not my portion.* Secondly, In a terrour and anguish of mind from these three heads : 1. From the guilt of sinne ; 2. From the apprehension of Gods wrath ; 3. From fear of death and of judgement. This is the three-stringed whip wherewith conscience is lashed. These ye shall find upon the conscience of Adam and Eve, when they had sinned against God. Their conscience was whipped 1. With the guilt of sinne ; *they saw they were naked,* Gen. 3. 7. 2. With the apprehension of Gods wrath ; *they hid themselves from the presence of*

of God, vers. 8. 3. With the fear of some vengeance which they began to look for ; *I was afraid*, saith Adam, vers. 10. This three-stringed whip ye may see also was upon the conscience of Cain after he had slain his brother : His conscience was whipt 1. With the guilt of sinne ; *My sinne is greater then can be forgiven* : 2. With the apprehension of Gods wrath ; *From thy face, O Lord, am I hid* : 3. With the expectation of death and of judgement ; *It shall come to passe that every one that findeth me shall slay me*. Thus I have shewed you what a troubled conscience is.

The degrees of a troubled conscience.

II. **T**He next thing I promised to shew is the degrees of a troubled conscience. A troubled conscience hath divers degrees : For some consciences are more troubled then other some. 1. The first degree is such a degree as may be in Gods children : and this ariseth not so much from the apprehension of Gods wrath as from the guilt of sinne : Their consciences grieve and are troubled to think that they have sinned and offended the Lord God. Thus we see David could not be at quiet : Although Nathan had told him from God that his sinne was forgiven, yet his conscience still troubled him : *Against thee onely have I sinned, and done this* Psal. 51. 4. *evil in thy sight*, saith he. I grant the consciences of Gods children are troubled at the apprehension of Gods anger ; but then it is his fatherly anger, not the anger of an enemy. Though for a fit they may seem to apprehend th^e too,

I 2 yet

yet mostly it is for that they have provoked their loving Father to anger against them. A father may be angry with his child out of love ; and so the Lord may be with his dear children. *The Lord was angry with me too*, saith Moses, Deur. 1. 37. *O let not my Lord be angry*, saith Abraham the father of the faithfull. *O God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth*, saith the Psalmist. Sometimes the Lord is angry with the prayers of his people ; but it is in love, because he would have them pray better, and obey better, and look to their standing better. Now the consciences of Gods people are very much troubled when the Lord is thus angry with them.

Psal. 30. 4.

2. The second degree of trouble of conscience is such as is in the wicked, and yet not altogether without hope. The conscience is troubled, but yet so as it conceiveth hope : *God is mercifull* ; and, *Christ died for poore sinners*, &c. Thus many a wicked man is troubled and affrighted in conscience, nor for sinne, but for the wrath of God against it ; yet he conceiveth for the present that the sinne is pardonable and may be forgiven : *Christ may forgive* ; *God may pardon*. It is indeed but a poore ground of hope and comfort upon possibilities : but yet this lightneth the trouble in the mean time, and it may be within a while shaketh it quite off : Like the wicked Jews, Isa. 57. 10. who were worried and wearied most grievously ; yet they said not, *There is no hope*. There may be much horroir and disquiet in these consciences for a time : but there is a higher degree yet, a worse troubled conscience than this,

3. The

3. The third degree of a troubled conscience is, when it is for the present altogether hopelesse; such a conscience as is swallowed up in despair: when men thinking of their manifold finnes, of the direfull wrath of God, of the dreadfull torments of hell for ever, their consciences make them despair of all hope or possibilitie of avoiding this; bringing such thoughts as these, *What a deal of time have I spent in sinne, wherein I might have made my peace with God, and have prevented all this? What a great and omnipotent God have I offended? What an infinite Judge have I provoked, who is able to revenge himself on me, and who will be my foe to eternitie?* conscience also bringing in thoughts of the torments and unsufferable pains to be endured in hell, and such swallow up in despair without all hope for the present or the future. Like the wicked man which Eliphaz speaketh of, *He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness,* Job 15. 22. So these have no hope of escaping, expect to perish as Spira; O, saith he, *I envy Cain and Judas: I would I were in their cases: They are damned; but I shall be worse for evermore.* Now though to these all hopes be gone for the present, yet some of these troubled consciences scramble up again with vain hopes, and some do not. Cain got up again, it should seem: but Judas did not. Those that never get up again, either 1. they live in intolerable horror and vexation of spirit, as if they had a devil in them to put them to anguish, and often (being weary of their lives) do make away themselves, and so leap quick into hell: or else 2. they

Desperatio
est homici-
da animæ,
Aug.

Desperare
est in infer-
num de-
scendere,
Isid.

runne desperately into all abominable courses : Their consciences telling them there is nothing to be expected but damnation, they give themselves desperately to commit sinne with greedinesse, saying with them in Jeremie, *There is no hope ; therefore we will walk after our own devices*, Jer. 18. 12. Or else 3. they grow senselesse of it. They see they are wrong, but they are not sensible of it. It may be they pray and reade and heare ; but their consciences secretly whisper, *All is to no purpose*. Conscience eateth Ezek 24. 23. and eateth like a worm, and they *pine away in their iniquities*, as the prophet speaketh. A kind of sorrow they have, but they cannot mourne ; a kind of sad dolour, but they cannot weep : *Ye shall not mone nor weep, but pine away in your sinnes*, saith the text. I confesse there be more presumers in the world, who promise themselves that all shall be well with them : but yet there be despairers too, and very many, whose consciences are troubled with secret despair ; though it may be not apparently to others.

Now the causes of these despairing consciences are these. 1. The greatnesse of sinne ; when the heart thinketh secretly thus, *Certainly the Lord cannot find in his heart to forgive me*. As it was with Cain : When he had lived in earthly-mindednesse, and then in formality, and then in discontent and in hatred, and then in hardnesse of heart, the Lord rebuked him, and yet his heart was so hard that still he went on in evil ; then he murdered his brother ; and lastly he despair-eth ; Gen. 4. 13. *My sinnes are greater, saith his conscience, then can be forgiven*. He thought God could not

not find in his heart to forgive him. So when men sinne and sinne, and the Lord doth rebuke them, and yet they do sinne, and their consciences do check them, and yet they go on, at last they come to have secret despairs in their heart, that God now will not look towards them; whereas if yet they had a mind to stoop to Jesus Christ, they might be forgiven. 2. A second cause of despairing is multitude of temptations. Indeed the godly should not be so apt to think themselves forsaken of God by reason of temptations as sometimes they are: they should rather count it joy, as James speaketh, chap. 1. 2. But yet many of the wicked despair finally by this means: Because they do so often fall into temptations, therefore they conclude they are forsaken of God. 3. Ignorance of Gods word. When the guiltiness of sinne meeteth with minds not instructed in the doctrine of free grace and reconciliation by Christ; this is a cause of despair. 4. So also inured custome of sinning is another cause. When men are often quickned, and grow dead again; then quickned again for a fit, and then hardned again: in the end they fall to despair. These and the like are the causes of despairing consciences. And thus I have shewed also the second thing propounded to be handled, namely, the sundry degrees of troubled consciences.

III. The third thing is the difference between the troubled conscience in the godly and in the wicked. The consciences of Gods children may be troubled, and are many times; and the consciences of the wicked they are troubled too: now the question is, How do they differ? I answer,

1. That

1. That trouble in the conscience of wicked men is accompanied with impenitency, and sometimes with blasphemy : *I would I were able to resist God*, saith Francis Spira : like those in the Revelation who *blasphemed God because of their torments*. Sometimes it is accompanied with cursings, as Isai 8. 21. sometimes with infinite murmuring. But in Gods children it is not so : When their conscience is troubled, they justify God, and clear God, and give him the glory of all, and submit under his hand, and subdue their hearts unto him : as David in his trouble did not fret and murmur against God, but saith he, *If God have no pleasure in me, lo, here I am : let him do with me what seemeth him good*. So that the trouble of conscience in the children of God and in the wicked doth much differ in this first respect.

2. Sam. 15.
26.

2. The trouble of conscience in the wicked ariseth onely from the apprehension of Gods wrath and fear of judgement for sinne, not for the sinne it self and from the love of holinesse : But that in Gods children ariseth chiefly for sinne, and the want of the apprehension of Gods love unto them : *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord ? for ever ? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me ?* Psal. 13. 1. Mark whence the trouble of the Psalmist came : This was his trouble, that God did hide his face.

3. Trouble of conscience in the wicked never maketh them part with sinne, never breedeth a hatred of sinne in them ; but that in Gods children doth. True it is that a wicked mans troubled conscience may make him vomit up his sinne, like

like a dog that vomiteth up his troublesome meat : but he doth not vomit up his stomach to that meat ; for when the trouble is over he returneth to his vomit again. So a carnall man returneth to his deadnesse of heart again, and to his security again, when the trouble is over. Pharaoh, whilst his conscience was troubled at the sense of Gods judgements, O then saith he, *I have sinned: I pray, Moses, let me have your prayers ; and I will let you go.* If the children of Israel could have packed up and departed while this trouble had lasted, they might have been gone. But *when he saw there was respite, he hardened his heart again.* Mark ; His trouble of conscience did not make him part with his sinne : But that in Gods children doth.

4. That in the wicked driveth them from God : They have little heart to come unto him: They see nothing but wrath ; and they rather go about to seek ease in other things then to seek his favour : as Saul sought ease in musick, and Cain in building castles and cities, and Judas in a desperate course. Their trouble fetcheth them not to God. But the trouble in Gods children worketh otherwise : In the midst of trouble of conscience they rest upon God : as He-man crieth, *O Lord God of my salvation,* in the midst of the troubles of his soul. The eyes of Gods children are still towards heaven ; they think still they should have some help from God : They pray and cry, and though God seemeth to neglect them, yet they cannot give over : They will not be beaten off from waiting on God when he will speak comfort to them.

5. That

5. That trouble that is in the wicked maketh their heart fullen ; but that in the godly melteth their heart : *My soul is like melting wax*, saith David in his troubles of conscience. His soul melted before God, and was even poured out before him, Psal. 22. 13. This is a kindly working. Thus ye see the difference.

Uses.

Use 1.

1. **BY** this we see what a miserable thing it is to have such a troubled conscience. It is the greatest misery that can be : it is even a hell to men here upon earth : it is like a dismall ghost to terrifie the soul : it is like a burning turnace in the bosome : it maketh the life bitter. In a word, the spirit of man is not able to bear it : *The spirit of man will sustain its infirmities: but a wounded spirit who can bear?* As long as a mans spirit is sound, it will bear any thing. Some have born agues, fevers, stones, colicks, convulsions, rackings, torturings : as long as a mans spirit is sound he is able to bear any of them, all of them : *but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Never was there man that was able to bear a wounded spirit. We may see by many of Gods children how heavy it is : David rored *with the anguish* of it : a strange phrase. Heman was ready even to runne out of his wits with it : *While I suffer thy terrors*, saith he, *I am distracted*, Psal. 88. 15. Moses putteth himself into the number, *We are even consumed by thine anger*, Psal. 90. 7. Ethan complaineth that it was like a burning fever : *How long, O Lord wilt thou hide thy face? for ever? shall thy*

thy wrath burn like fire ? Psal. 89. 46. If it be thus with Gods children, what may we think of the wicked ? If we could search into the bowels of some wicked men who are enemies to God, then we might see and understand the true weight and burden of this troubled conscience. Cain crieth out of *more then he can bear*. Judas thought to find more ease in hell then in his own heart : So terrible was the torture of his troubled conscience, that he murdered himself, thinking verily that hell could not be worse.

2. See here what an infinite misery every *Use 2.* sinner shall one day be in. Though he be not troubled with this harpye for the present, though he be not yet gastered with this furious hag; yet the day will come when he shall : I say the time will come when all ye that are wicked shall be haunted with this hellish agony of a troubled conscience ; either here before ye die, or when ye die, or at the furthest when your souls are departed out of your bodies : This is unavoydable to all that live and continue in sinne. Though for a while ye live in mirth and pleasure and securitie, and conscience letteth you alone ; though like Nabal to day ye feast and make merry ; yet there is a conscience within you, an Abigail which to morrow will tell you of it, and then your hearts will *die within you* ^{1. Sam. 25.} *and be like stones*, as cold and as heavie as a ^{37.} stone within you. As Samuel met with Saul, *Because thou hast forsaken the Lord, the Lord* ^{1. Sam. 15.} *also hath forsaken thee* : so conscience will find ^{16.} you out. However for a while ye slight and neglect

1. King's 21.
20.

neglect it, or else perhaps suppress it, yet it will find you out, as Eliah did Ahab, and then ye will say as he did, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? yea, I have found thee: Thou hast sold thy self to work wickednesse in the sight of the Lord: thou hast been a profane beast, thou hast runne against heaven, and against God and Christ; and thy life hath been full of rebellions, &c. now I have found thee out.* The day will come when thy conscience shall be like Jobs messenger. Ye know what news the messengers brought Job; first news of one great evil, and then of another greater, and then of a third worst of all; cattel and goods taken away, servants dead, sonnes and daughters dead, *I onely am left alive to tell thee:* So, I say, the time will come when conscience shall thus report, *Thy pleasures are dead; thy profits are dead; thy comforts are dead; thy heart is dead; thy soul is cursed, and must die for ever; and I onely am left alive to tell thee:* And then he shall crie out, *Cursed was I that ever I was born; and cursed be the womb that bare me: and the paps that gave me suck.* Then shalt thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy bodie are consumed, and thy conscience shall say, *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? I have not obeyed the voyce of my teachers, nor enclined mine ears to them that instructed me.* Such dolefull messages conscience will bring in one day; and then it shall hisse like a snake in thy bosome, *Know now that for all these things thou shalt come to judgement.* And so thy conscience shall bray thee like a fool

in a mortar, as it were with a pestill, and it shall pounce thee and beat thee and distresse thee for evermore. This is the moth that getteth into the cloth, and doth eat it : *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquitie, thou makest his beantie to consume away like as when a moth fretteth a garment.* This will make thy face gather blacknesse, and thy spirit be overwhelmed for evermore.

Psal. 39. 11.

I must adde another use yet : For all this is the law : and untill ye be in Christ ye are all under the law, the curse of it, the rigour of it : And we are bound to tell you how ye shall find it if ye do not submit to the righteousnesse of Christ. But though we do preach the law, yet we do preach it *in the hand of a mediatour*, saith Paul, Gal. 3. 19. a terrible killing law, but yet in a mercifull hand, in the hand of a mediatour, to drive us to seek for mercie : and therefore

The third use shall be, to call upon you to be humbled, and to see that there is no living for you in your finnes. Go and stoop to Christ *Use 3.* Jesus, who onely can purge your guiltie consciences by his blood. I beseech you, consider, ye who yet abide in your sinfull estates and are yet in the flesh : I beseech you, consider what the event will one day be. If ye will not look out, your consciences will find you out at the last, and then wo be to you. Your consciences will make all things grievous and bitter to you, even those things which in themselves are most sweet and good : When ye heare of heaven, of mercie, of the blood of Christ, these will but encrease your

your miserie : conscience will say, *You have no part in them.* When you heare the word, any promise or comfortable passage in it, your conscience will say, *Yea, this is my miserie, I have no share in these things.* This will be a hell unto you, and will torment you before your time. This will also make all outward good things bitter unto you : When you see wife and children and friends, then conscience will whisper and say, *I shall not have these long : ere long I shall have none but damned companie.* When you see your goods, estates, and the like, conscience will mutter, *Alas, ere long I shall be in a place where a drop of water shall not be afforded me to cool my tongue.* When you see the light and other comfortable objects, *O wo is me ; I shall shortly be in a place where I shall see nothing but darknesse, utter and everlasting darknesse.* Conscience will make your afflictions intolerable, your sicknesse intolerable, your death-bed intolerable, the face of death intolerable. I beseech you, brethren, consider these things, you that have not felt a troubled conscience untill this houre. Ye hardly know yet what it is : ye will know it to your sorrow, if you do not consider it. There is a phrase in Ezek. 30. 24. where God saith he will make Pharaoh grone with the gronings of a man deadly wounded : So it will be with you, if you will not hearken and submit to Jesus Christ ; conscience will make you grone with fearfull grones ; *O wo is me, I am undone, without hope, without remedie.* Consider this therefore, and be wise, before the things which concern your peace be hidden from you. And.

And let me the rather exhort you to this in *Exhortation.*
 regard of the danger of the times. The Lords
 wrath is gone out, and his judgements do flie
 through the earth, and his plagues do fall on
 every side of us : What will your guiltie consci-
 ences do now ? oh you can never endure them.
 Ye had need of purged consciences now lest ye
 be quite comfortlesse in the day of visitation.
 How miserable is their case who want the peace
 of conscience in the time of distresse ? When
 troubles and afflictions are without, then how
 grievous is it to want peace and comfort with-
 in ? When Gods mortall arrows are in your
 bodies, then to have the arrow of his wrath
 sticking in your souls, this will adde sorrow to
 sorrow, and make your estate much more un-
 comfortable and unsupportable. Beloved, peace
 of conscience is good at all times ; but it is most
 precious when calamities fall on us : Then to
 have the peace of a good conscience that may
 bring us good news from heaven , that all is
 well within, all peace there, this is such peace
 as all the world cannot give nor sell nor buy.
 Never more need of the peace of conscience then
 now. As one said of the books of faith, *There*
be abundance of books written of faith : buy *M. M.*
them all up, faith he ; *ye will need everyone of*
them ere long : So may I say of whatever may
 forward the peace of conscience ; Buy it, pur-
 chase it, get it, as much peace as you can pos-
 sible : ye will have need of it all ere long. Take
 heed of troubling your consciences or clogging
 them with guilt, lest the Lord cast you off, and
 lest ye be hardned, and so ye perish from the
 right

right way. Do not think thus, *O we are believers, and have no need of such threatnings.* He who is certain of his salvation knoweth assuredly he should be damned if he should go on in sinne without repentance; This *If* is true enough; *If the righteous forsake his righteousness, all his former righteousness shall be gotten.* And, *Wo is me,* saith Paul, *If I preach not the gospel.* In the state of innocencie there was use of threatnings: so is there now in the state of grace. The Lord threatned Adam in innocencie, *If thou eat thereof thou shalt die the death.* Job was awed by threatnings not to lift up his hand against the fatherlesse; for, saith he, *destruction from God was a terrour to me.* My flesh, saith David, *trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements.* Let us have grace, saith the Apostle, *whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.* Why? *for our God is a consuming fire.* For be it that Gods children (that is, all believers) shall never fall finally away; yet this threatening is one of Christs instruments whereby he keepeth them from falling: and they also may taste of much bitternesse if they grow indulgent to their corruptions. O therefore take heed of this curse, that your consciences may not dog you with the guilt of sinne and the apprehension of Gods wrath. You will never be able to bear it, much lesse in the time of affliction. O it is good being in a drie house when a great tempest is up: and it is safe being in a good harbour when a storm beateth hard. A good conscience is good at all times; but O how sweet then! When Jonah fell into

into affliction, the want of peace in his conscience made him look upon his affliction as upon hell, as though he had been in the belly of hell: *They who follow lying vanities, forsake their own mercies*, saith he. Mark; his conscience dogged him with his fleeing from God, and forsaking his own mercies. Ye see he was miserably distressed by it till the Lord did deliver him. Be charie then of conscience, and get it purged, that it may speak peace to you in trouble.

4 Questions.

NOW I have declared unto you, What a troubled conscience is; What is the cause of it, and wherein it consisteth; How many degrees there be of it; How the troubled conscience of the godly differeth from the troubled conscience of the wicked; the miserie of a troubled conscience; and, What a deal of mischief it doth one, especially in affliction: now I should leave this point, but that there be sundrie questions to be answered about it.

I. Suppose a man be rid of this trouble, and have peace of conscience, how shall he maintein it, and keep out troubles from it?

II. Whether and how the peace of our conscience dependeth upon our care and obedience?

III. What manner of obedience it is that peace of conscience doth depend on?

IV. If a man have no peace, but onely a burdened conscience, what must such a man do to be freed from it and to attein true peace?

I. Question; *How a man may keep peace of conscience.*

I begin with the first : Suppose a man have peace of conscience, what must he do to keep and maintain it ? I answer,

First, We must labour to prevent troubles of conscience by taking heed that we do nothing contrarie to conscience. We must not be drawn by friendship, or credit, or the love of any lust, to do that which conscience forbiddeth. Nothing should be so dear unto us as the peace of conscience : nothing for the love of it should make us do ought against our conscience. How miserable are those comforts, delights, satisfactions which we get to our selves in such courses as our own hearts do condemne ! However they seem comforts for a while, and contentments for a while, and delights for a while, yet at last it will appear that miserable comforts are they all. Nothing that we get in any evil way will chear and comfort us in a time of need. What said Francis Spira at the time of his death, when seeing his wife and children about him, and thinking on the goods and estate which he had got for them by denying the truth which he had before maintained against the Romish errours. he cried out in the horreur of his conscience, *How terrible is the sight of these unto me !* However before they had been comforts to him, yet now he could not endure the sight of them. *O, thought he, I recanted for your sake ; I yielded to superstition, and it was long of you :* Therefore he abhorred now the sight of them. Wretched is he that alloweth himself in any course which his conscience findeth fault with. It is a good rule the Apostle giveth, *Blessed is he that condemneth not himself*

self in that which he alloweth : that is, Blessed is he that hath not a condemning conscience, that alloweth not himself in any course wherein his conscience doth condemne him. So that if we have peace of conscience, and desire to maintein it, let us never allow our selves in any course that our conscience may condemne us in. That is the first answer.

Secondly, If we will maintein our peace, we must labour to have our hearts grounded in the assurance of the love of God : alas, it will fail us else, and leave us in trouble and perplexitie in time of greatest need. Observe how the Apostle joyneth love and peace together, 2. Cor. 13. 11. *The God of love and peace be with you.* If he be the God of love to us, it is sure enough he will be the God of peace also : If we know once that God loveth us, then we may set our hearts at rest : As long as we doubt of his love our conscience can never have true peace : And therefore if we would maintein true peace of conscience let us labour to be assured of Gods love.

Thirdly, We must use the exercise of faith in applying the blood of Christ ; we must labour to purge and cleanse our consciences with it. If we find that we have sinned, we must runne presently to the blood of Christ to wash away our sinne. We must not let the wound fester or exulcerate, but presently get it healed. As there is a fountain of sinne in us, so there is a fountain of mercie in Christ, *set open for Judah and Jerusalem,* and for every poore soul to wash in. As we sinne dayly, so he justifieth dayly, and we must dayly go to him for it : As every day we runne into

new debts, so the Lords prayer teacheth us every day to beg forgivenesse : We must every day eye the brazen serpent. Justification is an ever-running fountain, and therefore we cannot look to have all the water at once. A fountain ever runneth anew ; so justification ever floweth anew, and we must go to it. Christ is a *Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*. O let us sue out every day a dayly pardon of course ! Let us not sleep one night without a new pardon. Better sleep in a house full of adders and venomous beasts then sleep in one sinne. O then be sure with the day to clear the sinnes of the day.

Object.

Sol.

Then shall our conscience have true peace. But how if I have relapsed ? what shall I do then ? I answer, Every man that falleth doth not fall on all foure, as we use to say ; he doth not fall quite: There be degrees of falling. As in a sick man, though he be ill yet he is not by and by dead ; some life remaineth still, which will look out towards health again : so there is so much life in justification as to recover thee again. Be constant therefore in this course : Ever go to Christ, ever wash in this fountain, ever bring thy soul hither to be cleansed ; and then thy conscience ever shall have peace.

Ans.

4.

Fourthly, If we would maintein our peace, then let us labour to be constant in obedience to Jesus Christ. *Whosoever keepeth his word, in him verily is the word of God perfected ; and hereby know we that we are in him*, 1. John 2. 5. Mark ; Hereby our conscience may tell us that we are right, and speak peace to us, if we *keep his word*.

II. Question;

II. Question ; *How the peace of conscience doth depend upon our care and our obedience.*

The reason why I raise this question is this, Because as our justification is onely in Christ, so our peace is onely in him ; how then doth the peace of our conscience depend on obedience ? The place of Scripture that occasioneth the doubt is, 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* It is by Christ ; how dependeth it then on our obedience ?

Ans. 1. A good conscience doth not depend upon our obedience as the principall cause of it, but upon justification which we have by Christ if we be in him : Rom. 5. 1. *Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Ye see then that our peace is grounded upon our justification as the principall cause of it. If we should seek for peace from our works and obedience, alas, they are sinfull and defective ; there is no peace to be found in them : Our conscience would be troubled at our best duties, at our weaknesse in prayer, our frailties in hearing, our slips in every holy service : There is nothing we do but our conscience might find fault with it, and pick a hole in it : and therefore we had need to flie unto Christ for true peace. No wonder then that Papists have not true peace, but professedly say, that every man must doubt, and no man can be sure of his salvation. They must needs doubt indeed who trust to their own works : which can never bring true peace. The conscience must ever be quarrelling and finding offault, and be without peace, if we trust to the

best works. So that this is the first answer, All true peace dependeth upon justification by faith in Christ as the principall cause.

Secondly, We answer, That our peace dependeth upon our obedience in this sort, that we can have no peace except we be given to obedience. Those men that can sinne and yet be at peace, were never justified in their lives. A child of God when he sinneth ; as for example, if he should be tempted to lie, or to omit a good dutie, which he knoweth he is bound to perform ; yet this would much trouble his conscience ; his soul would be ashamed, his heart perplexed, he would not know how to look the Lord in the face ; *I have sinned : what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men ?* When David had sinned against God, *I am troubled*, saith he ; *and I go mourning all the day long.* And therefore peace of conscience doth depend thus farre on obedience, as that a man cannot have peace unlesse he be obedient, and take heed of sinne, and labour in all things to be upright before God. Now if you ask me, But how doth our peace depend upon our obedience ? I answer, It dependeth upon obedience as the removing cause : It removeth that which would hinder our peace. Sinne would interrupt our peace : now obedience removeth sinne. To this purpose the Apostle speaketh 1. John 3. 18, 19. *My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth : For hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before God : Hereby we shall assure our consciences that we are in him, if we take*

Psal. 38. 6.

Dub.
Sol.

take heed of hypocrisie : If we love in truth, and be obedient in truth, we shall thereby remove all our doubts and our fears, our troubles and perplexities of conscience. So that peace doth depend on obedience as the removing cause : It removeth that which otherwise would hinder peace. This is the first. Again, our peace of conscience dependeth upon our obedience as the witnessing cause of it. Obedience is one of the witnesses of true peace ; it witnesseth that we have peace with God. *This is our re-joycing, even the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicitie and godly sinceritie we have had our conversation in the world.* See here, it is the witnessing cause of it : Paul had peace of conscience ; his conscience was able to make him rejoyce : How ? Because it gave testimony that his conversation was godly and simple and gracious. Though we be in Christ, yet we can have no peace unlesse holy obedience doth witness the same. Obedience is not the cause of the peace of our consciences before God, but it is the cause of our perceiving the same : We know we have peace by reason of our obedience : We know that *every one that doeth righteousnesse is born of God : We know we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren : Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, by the spirit that he hath given us.* Mark ; we come to know it by obedience and by the fruits of obedience. Take away obedience, we can never know peace. *They that walk by this rule, peace shall be upon them and upon the Israel of God,* saith the Apostle. Thirdly,

2. Cor. 1. 12.

1. John 2. 29.

1. John 4. 13.

1. John 3. 14.

Gal. 6. 16.

ly, our peace of conscience dependeth on our obedience as the confirming cause : Christ confirmeth our peace to us by making us walk close to him and obedient unto him. Paul sheweth how it preserveth peace, as a shoe preserveth the foot : ye know if we should walk without shoes, barefoot, our feet would be in danger of pricking and hurting: So doth obedience to the

Ephes. 6. 15. Gospel preserve our peace : *Stand*, saith the Apostle, *having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.* Mark ; he compareth it to a shoe, which he would have us shod with ; and then it will be the Gospel of peace to us, and our peace shall be in safety. Fourthly, our peace dependeth upon our obedience, not onely as a signe of true peace, nor onely as a guard to it, but as a thing pleasing to God, without the which we displease God. For though God be pleased with his children alwayes in Christ, yet he is not pleased that any

1. Theff. 4. 1. in Christ should be disobedient to him. *Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God,* saith the Apostle. When Gods children walk in obedience, that is pleasing unto God. So that peace of conscience doth greatly depend on obedience : For otherwise conscience will be troubled ; *O I do not please God ; This is displeasing unto God ;* and, *This doth provoke God.* Not as though there were any such perfection in our obedience that can satisfie any tittle of Gods law ; but because when our persons are pleasing to God in Jesus Christ, then our obedience to God is pleasing too in Jesus Christ, and conscience will say it. Thus

much

much shall suffice for answer to the second question.

III. Question ; *What manner of obedience it is that peace of conscience dependeth upon ?*

The reason of this question is this ; Because it should seem there is no such obedience in this life as any peace of conscience should depend on. Doth not James say, *In many things we sinne all ?* Doth not our Saviour say, *When ye have done all that ye can, say, We are unprofitable servants ?* If our conscience can still say that we are unprofitable, and that we do sinne in every thing that we do, yea in many things, in all the duties we go about ; if our consciences can say thus, How can any peace depend upon obedience ? What obedience do you mean that peace of conscience dependeth upon ?

I answer, 1. Absolute perfection in obedience is not required unto evangelicall peace. For if it were, no man could have peace ; no not Paul, nor Abraham, nor any of the holiest of Gods children : and therefore absolute perfection is not required. *If we say we have not sinned, we make Christ a liar, and his word is not in us,* 1. John 1. 10. Our conscience can still say we have sinned ; and it can still say our obedience is imperfect : A halting leg can never go perfectly. A Jacob is called he that halteth ; and every godly soul halteth ; Though he do not halt between two, as wicked people do, yet he halteth in following after God. What purblind eye can see perfectly ? or thick eare heare perfectly ? He that hath these imperfections of body can neither go nor see nor heare perfectly ; So the best of Gods

Gods children have imperfections of heart and spirit and mind: their faith is imperfect, their love is imperfect; and therefore their obedience must needs be imperfect. But absolute perfection is not required to true peace of conscience; and therefore this doth not hinder it. 2. Though absolute perfection be not required to peace, yet such obedience is required as may be acceptable to God. So saith the Apostle, *We labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him.* Such obedience we must shew as may be accepted of him, or we cannot have true peace. If our endeavours be not acceptable, our conscience will quickly heare of it, and tell us so: If we pray coldly, or heare unprofitably, or live loosely, if we do not do that which is acceptable to God, our consciences will soon complain. Nay though we do do the duties, if we do not do them in an acceptable manner, conscience will have matter against us still. 3. This acceptableness of obedience lieth in this, when our obedience is sincere, universall, and totall, and proceeding from the spirit of Christ Jesus dwelling in us. The Apostle giveth it this phrase, *When we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.* Rom. 8. 4. That is our fulfilling the law, when Christ hath fulfilled the law for us, and maketh us sincerely to walk by it, not after the flesh but after the Spirit: when we do not favour our selves in one lust, nor suffer our selves in any beloved sinne; but whatever it be that is evil, our conscience can say we truly do hate it and labour to avoid it; whatever it be that is commanded us, be it never so contrary to our nature,

yet

yet our conscience can say we sincerely set our selves to do it. So walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, this is sincerity of obedience, and this is required unto peace. 4. This sincerity of obedience maketh us to bewail our very infirmities, and to be humbled for them : not onely to be humbled for greater sinnes, but also to be humbled for our infirmities. If we be not soundly humbled for our very infirmities also, they will hinder the peace of our conscience : We can have no peace except our conscience can witness that our infirmities do humble us and drive us to Christ and cause us to sue out a pardon. If conscience have not a pardon sealed for infirmities also, it will not be at peace. Christ bare our very infirmities : therefore we must be humbled for them, and go to him for pardon of them too, or conscience will not be at peace. Thus I have answered also this third question. Math. 3. 17.

IV. Question ; *How if a man have a burdened and troubled conscience, what must he do to be freed from it ?*

The reason of this question is this ; Because men are ignorant about it. When men are troubled in conscience and burdened a little that way, presently they daub all with peace, and go a wrong way to work. This course the Lord doth complain of in the false prophets who preached too much peace ; *They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* And so they do more hurt then good : Like a chirurgion that skinneth the wound before he giveth searching salves to kill the matter of it : afterwards it breaketh Jer. 8. 11.

breaketh out worse, and it is a hundred to one but it will cost the patient his life : So it is with many men : A man cannot rore a little for his finnes, *I have been a sinner, and what shall I do? I have been a beast, &c.* But, O, say they, *believe man, Christ died for thee, and the promise is to thee, and God will pardon thee.* Thus they heal him slightly with *Peace, peace*, and it may be there is no peace to him yet ; he had need to be searched more deeply: they skinne the wound, and it is a thousand to one but it loseth the mans soul, by giving a cordiall where a corrosive was necessarie. And therefore great reason that this question should be answered, If a man have a burdened troubled conscience, what must such a man do to be freed from it?

Deut. 29. ult.

I answer, 1. Let him take heed that he meddle not too much with the secret will of God, what his decree and purpose is from eternitie. As soon as an arrow is shot into the conscience, and the conscience cometh to be humbled, commonly the heart layeth about it, *And how if God have reprobated me? and what if he have appointed me to wrath? how then?* Beloved, ye must take heed of this : If your hearts fasten upon reprobation, that will marre all ; that will quite discourage a poore soul from going to God.

Marc. 16. 16.

2. Understand the word right. Do not think that because God hath not in particular named thee, therefore he hath excluded thee. Gods promises are made in generall to all that believe, and they are to be applyed in particular to all them that believe : why then shouldst thou exclude thy self when God doth not exclude thee?

Wouldst

Wouldst thou have Christ? Christ to justify thee? Christ to sanctify thee? Christ to rule thee? Wouldst thou be under Christs regiment, and live at his will? Come and welcome: no soul is excepted. *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* Rev. 22. 17. Ye see there is a *Quicunque vult*. Whosoever will. Indeed if thou hast not a will to be in Christ; but thou wilt do thus and thus, and thou wilt have thy will, and this lust, and that friend, and such a course, and, *Tush, this is too strict*; nay, if you be there thou art not for Christ: I have nothing for thee but hell and damnation. But if thou wouldst have Christ indeed, and be in Christ indeed, thy heart in Christ, thy will in Christ, thy whole self in Christ; then arise, he calleth thee. Thus understand the word right, the gospel doth not exclude thee whosoever thou art.

3. Thou must not for fear of shame or losse, &c. keep from restitution wheresoever thou hast done wrong, or satisfaction wheresoever thou hast cozened, or reformation wheresoever thou art accustomed to any evil, or the doing any thing that may procure ease and quiet to thy conscience. It may be one is troubled in conscience for his wronging his neighbour in twentie pounds, and if he would make restitution he might have sound peace: but he will not; no, he daubeth up his conscience some other way. Another it may be suffereth disorders in his familie and foul abuses, which if he would redresse he might have peace: but he will not. Another, if he would down with his pride; another, if he would be acquainted with Gods servants, or if

he

he would take any pains in good duties, be more diligent for the work of repentance, &c. but these things will not be done : Men plaister up their consciences (I know not how) some other way and so go to hell for not taking the right way. But if any of you be troubled in conscience, keep back nothing, hold back nothing that may make for your true peace and quiet.

Isai. 30. 18.

4. Thou must wait on God : Cast thyself at his feet, humbly desire him to give thee the true peace of conscience. But wait Gods leisure, knowing thou hast deserved to be utterly deprived of it : and thus doing thou shalt find it to thy great comfort at last. *Blessed are all they that wait for him* ; that is, when the Lord will be mercifull. He will do it with judgement ; he will do it when it may do thee the most good, when it may bring himself most glorie : therefore it is fit thou shouldst wait for his time of comforting. Now because many do misconstrue this waiting Gods leisure, (As for example, one is dead to all good duties, O, saith he, *I wait the Lords leisure till he quicken me : My heart is much hardened*, saith another ; *but I wait the Lords leisure till he be pleased to soften it.* Thus men are lazie in the mean while ; and yet they think they wait the Lords leisure. O beloved, this is not the waiting the Lord meaneth ; this will not stay conscience ; conscience is guiltie for all this waiting) therefore I beseech you consider what waiting I mean. 1. *Wait upon the Lord, and keep his way* ; thou dost not wait else, unlesse thou keep praying, and striving, and meditating, and enquiring, and watch-

psal. 37. 34.

ing thine own heart lest it should slip aside.
 2. Thou must wait as a servant waiteth upon his master : If his master calleth , he cometh ; if he sendeth, he goeth ; if he bekeneth, he taketh notice : So thou must wait. *As servants wait* Psal. 123. 4. *upon their masters, so our eyes wait upon the Lord till he have mercie upon us.* Be obedient in the mean time : go when he sendeth ; come when he calleth ; observe when he bekeneth ; be diligent to be doing his pleasure. 3. Thou must wait onely upon God, not upon thy lusts too, and upon other things too ; but thou must wait onely upon God : *My soul, wait thou onely upon God*, saith David, Psal. 62. 5. If thou wait upon any thing else, this is not to wait upon God. One waiteth a time to be revenged ; another waiteth a time to satisfie this or that lust : this is not to wait upon God at all. 4. Take heed of healing thy self, and comforting thy self, or daubing up thy conscience thy self : If thou dost so, thou dost not wait upon God to do it : If thou dost it thy self, and snatchest at comfort thy self before he do give it, then thou dost not wait till he give it. Suppose a man hath done thee an injury ; the Lord he will right thee if thou wilt wait : but if thou go and recompense evil for evil , and right thy self, thou dost not wait upon God. as Solomon adviseth, *Say not* Prov. 20. 22. *thou, I will recompense evil ; but wait on the Lord and he will save thee.* Mark ; thou must not save thy self, thine own credit, &c. by revenging, but wait on God for all. So here if thy conscience be troubled, thou must wait upon God to comfort it : If thou goest and daubest

up the matter thy self, and criest, *Peace, peace* to thy self, thou dost not wait upon God. Thus I have answered the last question, How if a man have a burdened and troubled conscience, what must such a man do to be freed from it? And hitherto we have spoken of the two last adjuncts of conscience, a Quiet conscience, and an Unquiet conscience; What they be, and, How they differ: and we have resolved and answered the questions and difficulties about them.

Conscience beareth witness of our persons.

CONCERNING the witness of conscience, I told you that conscience beareth witness of two things: 1. It beareth witness of our actions; 2. It beareth witness of our persons. The former hath been declared unto you at large: I come now to the latter; Conscience beareth witness also of our persons, whether we be good or evil, whether in Christ or in sinne: And here I will shew you foure things:

1. That every mans conscience may inform him what state he is in, whether of salvation or damnation, whether of grace or of nature.

2. How conscience doth it.

3. When conscience doth it.

4. How it cometh to passe then that so many thousands mistake and are ignorant and deluded about their estates.

1. Every
mans con-
science may
inform him
in what
state he is.

I. For the first, That every mans conscience may inform him what estate he is in, whether good or bad; (I speak especially of such as live under the light of the Gospel of Christ.) There are two rules: the one is Gods word, which pointeth

pointeth out both estates ; and the other is every mans conscience, which is privy to the frame and standing of every mans own heart, and which of these estates his estate is, conscience is privy to this. I will instance in some sorts of men,

1. The Jews, who contented themselves with formality : they sacrificed, they offered, they payed their tithes, they did that which Moses commanded them for the letter of it : now ye shall see their conscience could tell them that they were not perfect nor upright with God : All their duties, and formalities, and gifts, and sacrifices *could not make them that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.* Heb. 9. 9. Mark ; Their consciences could say they were not upright for all this. As they were not upright, so their conscience could tell them they were not upright. 2. Another instance we have in the Scribes and Pharisees : When they would have condemned the woman taken in adultery, their own conscience was privy that they were sinners themselves, John 18. 9. So also it is with a child of God : His conscience is able to inform him that he is a child of God, and that he doth truly serve God. *I thank God,* 2. Tim. 1. 3.

saith Paul, *whom I serve with a pure conscience.* His conscience told him he was a true servant of God, and that he was Gods : *whose I am,* saith he. So Davids conscience ; *I am thine ; save me : for I have sought thy commandments.* So the church ; *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* Ye see then how conscience can inform and tell us what estate we are in, whether we be godly or carnall, whether our conversation be

in heaven or on earth, whether we be in Christ or out of him. The spirit of man knoweth what is in him. It is easie to know what our greatest thoughts of heart are upon, what our greatest purposes and projects and studies be; whether about God or the world: the spirit of a man must needs know it. And therefore every man may draw out from conscience a true conclusion how it is with him. The reasons are these:

1. The first is taken from the nature of conscience. The nature of conscience is such that it must needs be able to know what is with a man. Now his welldoings or his illdoings are with him: he was with himself when he did them. When thou art proud, or impatient, or careless in any duty, thou art with thy self when thou art so: All thy illdoings are with thee: and therefore thy conscience must needs know what thou art. *Isai. 59. 12.* *Our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities we know them.* Take a curser; and, as Solomon saith, *Eccles 7. 22.* *Thine own heart knoweth that thou hast used to curse others.* So it is with a godly soul: Thine obedience is with thee, and thy self-deniall is with thee, and thy care to walk before God, all is with thee; and therefore thou must needs know it. This is the nature of conscience; It is privy to what is with one.

2. The second reason is taken from the equity of Gods judgements on the wicked. The Lord he will judge none to hell, but his conscience shall confesse he was one that walked in the way to hell and death. Ye may reade it in the man that had not on the wedding-garment: When

Christ

Christ did charge him with his not having on a wedding-garment, and did condemne him to utter darknesse, the text saith, *he was speechlesse*; Matth. 22. 12. that is, his conscience confessed that Christs judgement was just: *I have not on a wedding-garment*, saith his conscience; and it is my fault that I have none; and I am rightly condemned. Thus his conscience did know it; otherwise he could not have been speechlesse in his own defense. As Festus told Agrippa that he answered the Priests, *It is not the manner of the Romanes* Acts 25. 16. *to deliver any man to dye before that he who is accused have his accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him*: So may I say, that the great Judge of quick and dead will not judge any man to hell but he will have his accusers face to face, and if he can answer for himself he may. Now if conscience be not privy to what estate soever a wicked man is in, his conscience could never accuse him face to face at the last day, nor justifie the Lord Jesus and make the sinner stand speechlesse before God. He might answer, *Lord, I do not know any such thing as is laid to my charge: I am not convinced that the case is thus and thus with me, that I am in such an estate as I am accused of*. No wicked man shall be able to say thus: Therefore conscience can inform a man in what estate he is.

3. The third reason is taken from the Lords manner of judging the godly. He will judge them and absolve them *secundum allegata & probata*, as we say, according to the word and their own consciences. Ye may see the true form

of judgement which the Lord will go by. Matth
25. Where the Lord convinceth the whole
world who were righteous and who not, who to
be judged to punishment, and who to life for
ever; at last he concludeth, *The wicked shall go
away into everlasting punishment, but the right-
eous into life eternall.* As if he had said, *Your
consciences can say ye are wicked: ye did not
feed, nor clothe, nor visit me: Go your wayes to
hell.* So for the righteous; *Your consciences can
say ye are righteous: Go ye to heaven.* Thus the
Lord will do. Now this could not be if consci-
ence could not inform every one that is godly
that he is so: If conscience could not witness
what estate they are in, this could not be. Thus
ye see the truth of the first thing.

2. How
conscience
doth this.

II. The second thing that I promised to shew
you is, How conscience doth this. Ye have heard
that it is able to inform every one what estate he
is in before God: Now it followeth to consider
How conscience doth it. This it doth by compar-
ing the word of God with our hearts, and our
hearts with the word: As for example; *The
who have respect to all Gods commandments shall
never be ashamed,* saith the word: *But,* saith
conscience, *I desire to know all my dutie to God
and man, and to perform all that I know: and
therefore I shall not be ashamed.* To him that
soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward, saith
the word: *But,* saith conscience, *I plough up my
nature and all the fallow-ground of my heart, and
I sow righteousness: and therefore to me shall
be a sure reward.* So, *To be spiritually minded
is life and peace,* saith the word; *But,* saith con-
science

science, *I am spiritually minded ; my mind is set upon things that are spirituall : therefore I have life and peace.* So conscience also judgeth of the state of sinne. *Those that live after the flesh shall die,* saith the word : *But,* saith conscience, *my life is led after the flesh and the lusts of it : therefore I shall die.* He that believeth *not is condemned already,* saith the word : *But,* saith conscience, *I do not believe : therefore I am in the state of condemnation.* The word saith, *A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit : But,* saith conscience, *my works and my courses are corrupt and naught : therefore so is my heart.* Thus ye see that conscience doth it by reasoning : And this conscience can very well do ; 1. Because conscience hath a very good judgement. It is a very wise and judicious facultie in the soul of man. Some make it an act of judgement. We do not take it so : It is not an act of judgement, but it is a reflexive facultie of the soul having a very good judgement. *Whether it be right to obey you rather then God, judge ye,* saith Peter, Acts 4. 19. appealing to their own consciences to judge in the point. So that conscience is a facultie of a good judgement. Now if it be judicious, it must needs be able to reason and to argue about our estates, and find out whether they be good or no. It is the judgement of man that is able to argue, and able to hold an argument : *We thus judge,* saith the Apostle, *that if one died for all, then are all dead,* 2. Cor. 5. 14. Mark ; His proposition he would prove was, *That all the believers in Christ are dead to themselves*

and alive unto God. Now ye may see how his judgement maketh here an argument; *If Christ died for them all, then they are all dead: but Christ died for them all: therefore they are all dead.* Judgement is able to make arguments: and therefore if conscience be a reflexive faculty that hath a very good judgement, it must needs be able to frame arguments, and so make out what our estates are. 2. Because there is naturall logick in every mans conscience: It can frame syllogismes, thus, *As many as be led by the spirit of God, are the sonnes of God,* saith the word: *But,* saith a godly mans conscience, *I am led by Gods spirit, and I am carefull to follow the leading of Gods holy spirit: therefore I am one of Gods sonnes.* And so on the other side. Ye will say, How can a countrey-mans conscience make syllogismes? It is onely for scholars and such as have studied logick in the schools to make syllogismes. I answer, It is true; Artificiall logick is onely among scholars: But there is naturall logick in conscience, which doth not stand upon forms. The godly people at Rome were never brought up at Univerfitie: yet the Apostle telleth them they had logick enough to argue themselves to be dead unto sinne and alive unto God through Christ; *Likewise also,* saith he, *reckon ye your selves to be dead indeed unto sinne, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* The originall is, ἐπολογίζεσθε, *Exercise so much logick in your selves; Like good logicians prove your selves to be dead unto sinne and alive to God.* So that ye see there is naturall logick in conscience; and therefore

Rom. 6. 11.

therefore conscience is able to frame arguments about our estate, and to inform us what it is.

III. The third thing I propounded to consider is, When conscience doth this. This is a very necessarie point : and indeed so they are all ; but this more especially. I have shewed that conscience is able to inform us what estate we are in, whether of grace or nature : but when doth it perform this ? I answer , I need not so much speak of the godly, because they do mark conscience. But let me speak of such as are foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts, who never had yet the washing of regeneration nor the renewing of the holy Ghost : I answer about them ; 1. Their conscience must needs have a time when to do it. *I do remember my faults this day*, saith Pharaohs butler, Gen. 41. 9.

His conscience did inform him ; and there was a time when his conscience did inform him. 2. Conscience would choose a time by it self : it would inform a wicked man solemnly and punctually of his rotten and cursed estate he is in. I say, it would have a solemn time by it self for this, if it could have it : but a wicked man taketh an order with his conscience that it shall not tell him solemnly how it is with him ; neither will he find a time to suffer it : As it was with Felix ; When his conscience began to grumble against him, when Paul had told him of righteousness and of judgement, he trembled. his conscience began to stirre, and would then have solemnly dealt with him indeed : but he shuffled it off, and would not find time ; *Go thy way at this time*, saith he to Paul ; *I will heare thee*

3. When conscience doth this.

Acts 24. 25.

thee at a more convenient time. And so he said to his conscience too. Conscience would take a solemn and set time to inform men what their estates are; but men will not suffer them: and therefore conscience is faine to take such sudden times as it can get. Ye will ask, What times be they?

Conscience
interlineth.

I answer, First, when conscience interlineth: As for example, in the hearing of the word: While men are hearing the word, it may be the preacher preacheth of holinesse, and a wicked man heareth it; *But I have it not*, saith his conscience. Mark; his conscience interlineth. It may be the preacher is preaching how desperately carelesse men are of their souls, how they look to every thing more then to them; conscience interlineth, *This is my case*. It may be he is preaching against adulterie; *This sinne I have committed*, saith a guiltie conscience: or against rushing upon Gods ordinances without preparation; *This is my constant course*, saith an evil mans conscience. It may be the preacher is preaching of conversion and becoming a new creature in Christ; *This I am yet to seek in*, saith conscience. Thus conscience interlineth: Though the man heareth on, and it may be taketh little to heart, yet conscience interlineth a sudden information of his wretched estate. Like a bird that flieth by, or like a swift-shot arrow, that is presently out of sight, so it may be a man taketh very little notice of it. Like

Acts 24. 25.

the forenamed Felix: as Paul was preaching of righteousness and temperance, *I have it not*, saith his conscience; and of judgement to come,
What

What shall I do then? saith his conscience. Thus conscience interlined, and made him tremble on a sudden, like a sudden shivering of a cold, or a sudden startle of a man affrighted, and away it was gone quickly. I beseech you observe your own bosomes. Do ye not feel this now and then at a sermon, when ye heare it? do not your consciences interline our sermons, and put in parentheses now and then? When ye heare such and such a sinne reprov'd, condemned, *And this is my sinne*, saith conscience: when ye heare these and these graces commended, *And I never had these*, saith conscience: when ye heare these and these marks of a carnall estate, *And these or some of these are in me*, saith conscience? do not your consciences interline in this manner? As Paul was speaking to the shipmen concerning God, his conscience did sweetly interline thus, *There stood by me this night* Act. 27. 23. *an Angel of God, whose I am*, saith his conscience. And as he was writing to the Romanes, *God is my witnesse*, saith he, *whom I serve in* Rom. 1. 9. *my spirit*. But do not your consciences interline otherwise with you? If they do, I beseech you consider it: Your consciences do then truly inform you of your rotten estates: listen to them.

Secondly, when conscience falleth a choking. Conscience choketh. As for example, in prayer: a wicked man prayeth; *But I do not pray right*, saith his conscience. *I humbly beseech thee, O Lord: Nay, but I do not beseech humbly*, saith his conscience. *I desire to be sanctified & purged from my sins: Nay, but I do not hunger after any such thing*, saith conscience. *I do not confesse my sinnes right, nor beg for*
grace

Num. 12. 4.

grace right. Do your consciences choke you thus? Now your consciences inform you of your estates. Peradventure ye hardly perceive this choking at all: It is done in a moment, and is presently ceaseth, because ye are not willing to heare it: and therefore it may be conscience doth it by sudden flashes. It is said the Lord *spake suddenly* to Moses: so often conscience speaketh suddenly to men, a word and away. As David saith of the wicked, *God shall shoot an arrow at them, and they shall be wounded on a sudden*: So conscience shooteth a quick arrow, and it woundeth men in the twinkling of an eye, and it is gone. *Lord, have mercy upon us*, said one: *But I should not say so vainly and in ordinary talk*, saith conscience. *I do not hate this man for his holinesse and strictnesse*: *But you do*, saith conscience. And so when men are defending evil by arguments; *But this is false*, saith conscience. Thus conscience choketh on a sudden, and is gone. I confesse generally the men of the world mark not these things: They are such sudden sparklings of conscience that men for the most part do not heed them: But these are Gods witnesses; and men shall know one day they were truly informed of their estates by these instantaneous *Items* of conscience.

Thirdly, when conscience shooteth like a stich in a mans side. As for example; Sometimes when men are about their callings and their wordly businesse, then cometh conscience like a sudden stich in ones side, and giveth them a twitch, *O how worldly am I!* saith conscience: *Shall I never get this worldly-mindednes cured?*

Many

Many times conscience speaketh while men are working, or playing, or eating, or buying, or selling.

Fourthly, so likewise when conscience commenteth upon the judgements of God. Let an adulterer fall sick; *Yea, this is for mine adultery*, saith his conscience. Let a company-keeper be in want of outward things; *Yea, this is my drunkenness*, saith conscience: *This is my wickedness, my way, my doings which have procured me these things; this ague, this poverty, this shame, this discomfort.* Thus I have shewed you how conscience doth inform the wicked of their wretched estate; and when it doth it, It remaineth now that I speak something of the fourth point.

IV. How cometh it to passe then that so many thousands mistake, and are ignorant and deluded about their estates? The reason of this doubt is this; Seeing conscience is able to inform every one what his estate is, whether it be blessed or cursed; and seeing also that conscience doth it; and doth it by argument; and hath its time when it doth it: a man now would wonder that any should be ignorant of his estate when his own conscience doth tell him how it is with him. For answer I will explain unto you two things: 1. The reasons why men are mistaken; 2. The reasons why they are mistaken though conscience inform them.

First, They build upon false grounds which are not in Gods word. Some are so foolish that they build upon outward things, as health, peace, prosperitie, successe, and the like. They prosper,

4.
Why many
are deluded
about their
estate.

prosper, and all things go well with them, and therefore sure God is at peace with them : This is not so ; but they think so though. Some again build upon grounds which men of corrupt minds do give them , or which they take from the common opinion of most , thinking that to be faith and repentance which the most take so to be , or which a teacher fit for their palate taketh so to be. On the contrarie side, weak Christians oftentimes mistake themselves by judging their estates to be bad, because God letteth them be poore and mean & comfortlesse in the world : Therefore they conclude God is angrie with them, or that they are not that which they seem to themselves to be , because they are so crossed in all outward things. This is the first reason of error in this kind.

Reas. 2. 2. A second reason is the not-right understanding of Gods word : As when men judge of themselves by such places of Scripture as were not inteded to be rules & to be of use to such ends as they apply them : as *Whosoever calleth upon the Lord shall be saved*, Rom. 10. 13. Hence the wicked may falsely conclude, *I call upon the Lord, and I pray unto him ; therefore I shall be saved*. And so on the contrarie, a weak Christian who findeth not in himself those degrees of grace which some places of Scripture seem to require concludeth from thence against himself, *Therefore I have no grace at all*. This is a second cause of mistaking.

Reas. 3. 3. A third cause is the not trying and examining our own hearts. Some are loth to trouble themselves about it : They are loth to think so

so bad of themselves as that they are in such a course as wherein God will not love them. Nay, they cannot endure that others should discover their hearts unto them : They had as lieve they should shew them the pit of hell as shew them themselves. They look to some common gifts and graces that are in them, such gifts and graces may be in a reprobate, but they will not think so ; as illumination, knowledge, the gift of prayer, of temperance, &c. These they look to, and these they speak of, though they have reigning lusts within in their hearts : As Jehu ; *Come, see my zeal*, saith he, 2. Kings 10. 16. He doth not say, *Come, see my pride and hypocrisie* : but, *my zeal*. Jehu looked at his zeal, and so thought he was right. So on the contrarie, weak Christians may sometimes look onely at their sinnes and infirmities, and take no notice of Gods graces that are in them, & so may mistake their own selves, & conclude amiss of their estates. Thus I have shewed you the reasons why men are mistaken about their estates. Now I will shew you the reasons why men are mistaken though conscience do tell them.

1. Because the speeches of conscience in the wicked many times, yea most times, are low speeches. The gnawings of conscience whereby they are told they are in a bad and a damned estate are like the gnawings of a very little worm that a man can hardly feel. *Where their worm dieth not* : The word in the originall, **וְיִלְחֹחַ** signifieth a very little worm that breedeth in scarlet, that a man can very hardly see or perceive : so men sometimes do hardly see or

or perceive the condemning and gnawing conscience. Again, conscience biteth suddenly as I told you ; it giveth a little nip, and away Like a sparrow that flieth by ; it flieth so fast by a mans eye that he can scarce tell whether it be a sparrow or no : So it is not easily perceived whether it be a condemning conscience or no : it giveth such sudden nips, and away, that men seldome take notice. Beloved, there is never a wicked man under heaven; unlesse he be delivered up absolutely to a reprobate sense, but hath a thousand of these sudden momentary nips every day in the year. Had he the heart to observe them (but he hath not) he might see his wretched estate, to trouble him, and provoke him to Christ, and to be converted that God might heal him ; I say, had he a heart he might see it : but these nips are so secret and sudden that he doth not. So likewise it is with the godly in regard of true comfort : Their conscience suddenly flasheth in comfort, and they many times do not observe it. As Job speaketh of God, *Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, and I perceive him not* : So doth the Lord go by his children in the sudden flashes of comfort in their conscience, but many times they see him not, perceive him not.

Job 9. 11.

2. Because the devil blindeth mens eyes, therefore they do not see what their consciences do shew them. Ye may reade this of the wicked people in Corinth : S^t Paul saith he *commended himself and the Gospel to every mans conscience in the sight of God* ; that is, He did so preach, and so live, that every mans conscience

1. Cor. 4. 2.

ence

ence could not choose but say, *Certainly Paul preacheth the truth, and Paul liveth right, and we must live as he speaketh and doeth.* He made their consciences say thus, and to tell them they were not right if they did not. But mark what followeth: Some did not see this: Why? *The god of this world, saith he, hath blinded their eyes.* So the god of this world blindeth the eyes of the wicked, that what their consciences shew them they do not see it nor observe it. So for Gods people; Though they be in a good and a blessed estate, and their consciences can say it, yet Satan oftentimes hindereth them that they do not perceive their own comfort.

3. Men do not love conscience. We should love conscience better then the dearest friend we have under heaven. We would do much for a friends sake: but we should do a thousand times more for conscience sake: Obey Magistrates for conscience sake; suffer disgrace, reproches, any thing, for conscience sake. It is better then all the friends in the world. But the wicked, they do not love conscience: let conscience speak, they care not to heare it. They will heare friends, but they will not heare conscience. Let their lusts call, and their profits and pleasures call for this and that thing, they heare all: but they love not to heare conscience. Nay, many wicked men are angry to heare talk of it. When Paul had made mention of conscience, Ananias commanded he should be smitten: *Men and brethren, saith Paul, I have lived in all good conscience before God untill this day.*

Rom. 13. 5.

Act. 23. 5.

M

Smite

Smite him on the mouth, saith the high Priest Ananias. He was angry to heare him talk of a good conscience. This is most certain ; men do not love conscience, nor to be curbed by conscience, nor informed by conscience : They had as lieve see the devil as that their consciences should inform them of their estates, and tell them thus and thus they are. They are told rightly, and yet they are mistaken, because they do not love to heare conscience of that theme.

Of a good and bad conscience.

YE have heard concerning the witnesse-bearing of conscience about our estates. The next thing to be spoken of is that welknown distinction of a Good and a Bad conscience. This distinction we reade of in Scripture : Concerning a good conscience see Heb. 13. 18. *We trust we have a good conscience.* Concerning a bad conscience see Heb. 10. 22. *Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.* There be both the members of the distinction. Of them both briefly and in order ; and first of a good conscience.

Concern-
ing a good
conscience

The goodnesse of conscience is twofold ; naturall, and renewed. 1. The naturall goodnesse of conscience consisteth in those reliques of goodnesse which it reteineth since the creation. Ye know man depraved and corrupted his conscience by his fall : yet there be some reliques left, as reason, and knowledge, and reflexion. I do not mean reliques of any spirituall goodnesse in conscience : For as there is no spirituall goodnesse left in the other faculties of the soul, so nei-
ther

ther in conscience. But the naturall goodnesse which I mean is nothing else but the veracity of conscience, whereby it is inforced according to the knowledge it hath to tell the truth. Thus every wicked man hath a good conscience: Their conscience is good in that sense ; their conscience hath this naturall goodnesse, that it telleth them the truth how it is with them. Nay, it is essentiall to conscience to be good in this sense. It is the essentiall property of conscience to speak according to its knowledge. It is the best faculty a wicked man hath : it is better then his mind, or heart, or will. There is more goodnesse in a wicked mans conscience then in any other of the powers of his soul : His conscience speaketh more for God then himself doth, and standeth more for God then himself will. Not but that as all the powers of the soul are desperately corrupted by sinne, so conscience is desperately corrupted as well as any of them : but I speak of the essentiall goodnesse of it, which can never be lost. The devils in hell have not lost the goodnesse of their essence : Nay, their essence is better then the essence of Gods Saints : their essence must be good, because that is Gods creature ; nay, better then any mans essence, because the Lord made them a degree above man. And as man is a degree above beasts, so angels are a degree above man : so conscience is a degree above other powers of the soul in its naturall goodnesse. That conscience hath such a naturall goodnesse in it, see it in those cursed Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who brought the woman taken in adultery to Christ : Their conscience was good ;

John 8. 9. they were convicted of their consciences: their consciences dealt honestly with them, and told them the truth that they were wicked sinners themselves. This is the naturall goodnesse in conscience.

2. A renewed good conscience. I call it a renewed good conscience, because when a man is renewed, all the man is renewed; all his mind and the spirit of it is renewed, *Ephes. 4. 23. That ye may be renewed in the spirit of your mind.* If the man be renewed, all the mind must be renewed; and therefore the conscience must be renewed too; for the mind and the conscience ever go together: nay, conscience is mainly seated in the mind; and therefore if the mind be renewed, so is the conscience; and if the mind be defiled, so is the conscience. *To them that are defiled is nothing pure, but their minds and consciences are defiled.* Mark; When they are defiled, they are defiled together: so when they are washed and renewed, they are washed and renewed together. Now this renewed conscience is either perfect or defective. 1. Perfect. I mean not perfect in every degree of goodnesse: For so no mans conscience in the world is perfect: But I mean perfect in every part and condition of goodnesse. 2. A defective good renewed conscience is that which faileth in some conditions of goodnesse. We call it a *weak* conscience, which is apt to be polluted and defiled again. *1. Cor. 8. 7. Their conscience being weak is defiled.* This is a defective good conscience, a conscience renewed, but imperfectly renewed.

A firm conscience.

I. To a good conscience that is soundly renewed five things are necessary. 1. Know-

1. Knowledge of Gods will, and that which doth follow the true knowledge of his will, namely true humiliation and fear. By nature the conscience is blind and sturdy and venturous ; and therefore it is necessary that it should be enlightened to understand the will of God and to presse it ; and again it is necessary that the heart should be humbled, or else it will not stoop to Gods will : and it is necessary also that this holy fear should fall upon the heart, that it may not dare to transgresse. S^t Peter being to speak of a good conscience, premiseth all these as necessarie thereunto : First he adviseth that Christians have knowledge to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in them ; and then that they should have meeknesse and fear, for to do it : *with meeknesse and fear*, saith he, *having a good conscience.* 1. Pet. 3^d 15, 16. Mark ; Knowledge and meeknesse and fear are required to make a good conscience ; without them the conscience cannot be good. By nature we are all blind, and stubborn, and fearless of sinning : and therefore till we be cured of these evils, our consciences cannot be good.

2. The second thing is a watchfulnesse and warfare against sinne : This is required too to a renewed good conscience. By nature we are drowsie, and carelesse, and secure, and do not stand upon our guard to wage warre against our lusts and the desires of our flesh ; and so long our consciences can never be good : and therefore this spirituall watchfulnesse and mainteining warre against sinne is required to the having a good conscience : *That thou maist warre a good warfare*, saith Paul to Timothee, *having faith*

and a good conscience, 1. Tim. 1. 18, 19. Some who seemed to have a good conscience, because they did not maintein this holy warfare against sinne and the flesh, they have lost it : Therefore this is another requisite required to a good conscience.

3. The third is tenderneffe of conscience. By nature our hearts are seared, and dead, and unclean : and therefore we must get us tender and pure hearts if we would have good renewed consciences. *The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart and good conscience and faith unfeigned,* 1. Tim. 1. 5. See how the Apostle compoundeth them together, *a pure heart and a good conscience.* We must get our hearts purged and quickened, that they may be sensible of the least evil ; and then our consciences will be good and be as a bridle to hold us from evil. A hard heart and a good conscience can never stand together.

4. The fourth is the cleannesse of conscience by the washing of Christs blood. This is the main and the principall of all : Yea indeed the blood of Christ is the sole and onely cause of a good conscience. I would not be mistaken : I named indeed other causes ; Knowledge, and Humbling, and a holy Fear, a Combat against sinne, and Tenderneffe : but I do not mean as though a good conscience were partly beholding to them and partly to Christs blood : For it is wholly and onely beholding to Christs blood for its goodnesse ; his blood is the onely price of it : But my meaning is this, That though Christs blood be the one onely cause of redemption, yet

in the application of redemption the Lord useth all those forenamed graces while he applieth it to the conscience. Therefore this now I adde; The washing of Christs blood, this is chiefly required to the goodnesse of conscience. We have two places of Scripture to prove it: The one, Heb. 9. 14. *How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your consciences from dead works?* It is that onely can do it. The other text is 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* Where the Apostle first giveth this title to a renewed conscience, to be called a *good conscience*: Secondly, he nameth the cause that maketh it to be good, the power of *Christs resurrection*: When the resurrection of Christ Jesus is powerfull upon us, then conscience becometh good.

5. The fifth is quietnesse. By nature nothing is so fierce and violent, if it be once awaked, as conscience is: O it is unspeakably furious. Thus is conscience by nature: and therefore it can never be good untill we get it appeased with the assurance of the pardon of our sinnes, and so true peace and comfort established in it. This is the reason why the Scripture joyneth a good conscience and faith so often together: as 1. Tim. 3. 9. *Holding the mysterie of faith in a pure conscience.* It cannot be a pure or good conscience if faith be not held in it. As long as the conscience is not underpropped by faith, the conscience must needs be in a wildernesse: *Perhaps my sinnes are imputed unto me; perhaps they are pardoned: Perhaps they are covered, perhaps not.* As long as the conscience lieth under these uncertainties,

it cannot be firm and soundly good indeed: therefore we must labour for assurance of pardon by faith. Thus much of a good renewed conscience that is perfectly and soundly renewed.

An infirm
conscience

II. Secondly, There is a good conscience renewed but not soundly renewed, very much as yet defective and imperfect. The former conscience is called *conscientia firma*, a firm conscience: This is called *conscientia infirma*, an infirm conscience. Rom. 15. 1. *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.* This infirm conscience is a good conscience too, and renewed, but cumbred with sundry imperfections; which in proceſſe of time by growth in grace are, for the most part, conquered in the godly. True faith is required unto this: For the Apostle calleth such an one *a brother in Christ*, one that hath this infirm conscience: *It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.* And we must not set such an one at nought, *Tush, what care I for him? I know I may lawfully do thus: and this is my Christian liberty; and shall I lose it for him, because of his conscience?* Nay saith the Apostle, *Why dost thou set at nought thy brother?* Mark; The Apostle counteth such an one a Christian brother, and not to be set at nought: and therefore this is a good conscience too, differing as much as white from black from such consciences as are weak through superstition of mind and through pride of heart because they will not be otherwise, or through affected ignorance because they love not to be better informed. These weak consciences are wicked; I speak not of these; I

speake

Rom. 14. 21.

Rom. 14. 10.

speak of a good conscience, a conscience renewed, but renewed imperfectly, having yet sundry defects and imperfections. The imperfections of it are

1. Imperfection of knowledge. It doth not yet soundly and clearly understand what is lawfull and what is pure, and what is by Christian liberty indifferent. Paul saith, *I know and am* Rom. 14. 14. *perswaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of it self : but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* He speaketh of things that are indifferent : The Apostle had knowledge: but there were others who did not know this ; *O I may not eat this meat ; I may not play at bowls, or use any other recreation : I should sinne if I should, &c.* This is one weaknesse in this kind of conscience, weaknesse of knowledge.

2. The second imperfection is to be grieved where it needeth not be grieved : As when it seeth other do that which it self through mistake doth judge to be evil, it is apt to be grieved and troubled to see it; *If thy brother be grieved with* Rom. 14. 15. *thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.* It may be thou thinkest it lawfull to eat such meat; but he thinketh otherwise, and so is grieved to see thee eat. This is another imperfection in this conscience, to be grieved and offended without just cause.

3. A third imperfection is in judgement : It is apt to judge and condemne another mans liberty : 1. Cor. 10. 29. *Why is my liberty judged of another mans conscience ?* He speaketh of a weak conscience, *It is apt to be judging & condemning*
 my

my liberty saith he ; but why so ? This is a fault and an imperfection indeed ; O such an one sinneth, he doeth so and so : yet it may be the thing is not unlawfull but a weak conscience is apt so to judge it, and to condemne him that doeth it. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not : and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth, Rom. 14. 3.

4. A fourth imperfection is this : A weak conscience is apt to be misled. So the Apostle intimateth ; *Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block unto them that are weak : for if any man see thee who hast knowledge sit at meat in the idoles temple, shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldned to eat those things which are offered to idoles ? and through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish for whom Christ died ?* Where ye see that weak consciences are apt to be misled. The reason is this, Because when they see others whom they know to be more learned and judicious then themselves to do so and so, that may soon tempt them to do it though their conscience be against it.

1. Cor. 8. 9,
10, 11.

Use 1.

The first use is this ; If any have weak consciences let them labour to strengthen them. Ye see what imperfections are in a weak conscience ; how apt it is to be offended and to judge other mens liberty, how prone to misleading ; therefore let every good soul labour to be strengthened.

2.

The second use is this ; Those that be strong must be carefull that they offend not the weak. Though they do believe such and such Christi-

an

an liberties they have, yet if they know the use of them will offend their weak brother, they should be carefull to abstain, *Let no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brothers way.* Rom. 14. 13.

Thirdly, if it be such a sinne to sinne against the conscience of the weak, then what a sinne is it to sinne against the conscience of all that are godly, whether weak ones or strong ones? Ye who walk after the flesh, and can have disorders in your families, and vanity in your mouths, and apparent corruptions in your lives; Ye who can drink and be drunken and keep company and profane the Lords dayes; ye offend the consciences of all that are godly: it is a grief to their souls to see it. Let me tell you; It is a sinne to be wicked however, and the high-way to hell: but to be wicked when ye have godly neighbours about you, your sinne now is double: For as you offend God, so you offend them too. Ye may remember what Christ saith, *Whosoever offendeth one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck, & that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* Matth. 18. 6. Ah ye vile wretches! ye little imagine what fearfull vengeance ye pull on your own heads: It were better for you that a millstone were hung about your necks, and ye thrown into the sea, then that ye should offend one of these little ones. Ye may call them what ye will; call them *puritanes, precisians, uncharitable people, censurers*: ye may call them as Satan teacheth you to call them: but it is certain, it were better a millstone

3.

millstone were hung about your neck, and ye thrown into the sea, then that ye should offend any one of Christs little ones : The Lord open your eyes that ye may repent and believe the Gospel your selves and be saved.

4. Lastly, be exhorted, brethren, to labour after a good conscience. How excellent a thing is it that hath so many good ingredients ! Illumination is one ingredient, and Faith is another, and Tenderneſſe another, and Pureneſſe another, and Quietneſſe another, and the Bloud of Jeſus Chriſt another. It is like Aarons compoſition, which ſmelt ſweetly when he went into the ſanctuarie : It is compounded of excellent conditions, ſuch as ſmell ſweet when we come before God : the Lord loveth that ſuch ſhould come near him. We may come with aſſurance to ſpeed if we come with a good conscience ;

Heb. 10. 22. Let us draw near with aſſurance of faith, having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil conscience. Mark : we may draw near with aſſurance if we come with a good conscience. It will comfort us in all troubles, and ſupport us in all dangers : It maketh us happie : nay, there is no happines without it. It will make us with quietneſſe & contentedneſſe of ſpirit undergo whatever it ſhall pleaſe God to lay upon us. How can they want comfort that have this ? It is a ſpring of comfort within them. This will remain with us when all other comforts will forſake us : When friends fail, and eſtate faileth, when credit and health and ſtrength and all fail, then a good conscience, if we have it, will ſpeak peace to us, yea and it will effect it in us, comfort us, and

and fasten comfort upon us. Friends may speak words of comfort and peace to us; but it may be we are not able to receive it: the minister may preach peace; but it may be we are not able to take it: But a good conscience speaketh peace and effecteth it; it doth not onely speak it but it putteth it into our hearts. It proppeth us up in all miseries, in sicknesses, yea in death it self. A good conscience then maketh us hold up our heads when all the world shall be confounded: 'A good conscience will bear us out against the King of terrors: It is onely a good conscience that can look death in the face, and say, *O death, where is thy sting? thanks be to God who giveth us victorie through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Yea, at the day of judgement, when the whole world shall be burning before us, when the great men of the world who go in silks and scarlet and broidered hair shall fear and shiver as a reed shaken with the wind, this will make us with boldnesse undergo the terror of it. This will make us happie in all our distresses: When crosses pelt us, and sickness paineth us, and death attatcheth us, we are happie men. What if we have the tokens of Gods wrath upon our bodies so we have the marks of his love upon our souls? What outward calamitie soever happeneth to us, yet if we have this good conscience we are happie. O then let us labour to get it by faith and a holy life. If we would be safe in the floud-time, in the day of Gods wrath, we must be busie now about the ark, we must provide beforehand for it: Nothing but this ark will save us in the deluge of Gods

1. Cor. 15. 55.

Gods anger. It is in vain to trouble our selves
 about other things : Jubal was a merrie man;
 he made pipes and organes : Jabel built tents ;
 others planted vineyards : but Noah provided
 his ark. Many desire comfort in sicknesse, in
 death ; but they do not provide for it before-
 hand : They look after their sports or busines-
 ses in the world ; but this ark is neglected, this
 good conscience, without which all mens labour
 is vain. Be they what they will be, in never so
 much credit and esteem, they are yet most mi-
 serable when troubles and afflictions come on
 them, as one day they shall and shall not carrie;
 then all their comforts will forsake them: When
 death looketh them in the face: then their hearts
 die within them. How full of pride and haugh-
 tineesse soever they were before, yet when they
 come to die, if their consciences be awaked, they
 will with Saul fall down to heare the name of
 death, and no spirits be left in them. Nay, if we
 want a good conscience when we lie on our
 deathbeds, and desire good people to pray for
 us, *Good sir, I beseech you let me have the be-
 nefit of your prayers to God for me :* Alas, if thou
 hast not a good conscience, all the prayers under
 heaven will not help thee. See Heb. 13. 18.
*Brethren, pray for us : for we trust we have a
 good conscience.* Mark ; The Apostle telleth
 them they may pray for him with comfort, be-
 cause he had a good conscience. As if he had
 said, *If we had not a good conscience, it were
 in vain for you to pray for us.* If ever God heare
 the prayers made for us, we must have a good
 conscience. Those that have not this good con-
 science

1. Sam. 28.
 20.

science shall never enter into the kingdome of heaven : Though they had Moses, Daniel, and Job to pray for them, yet all their prayers could not help them in the time of their distresse.

The bond of conscience.

NOW we must look back unto the foure propositions which at the beginning I observed in the text I am upon ;

1. That there is in every man a conscience.
2. That the light which directeth conscience is knowledge.
3. That the bond which bindeth conscience is Gods law.
4. That the office of conscience is to bear witness, to accuse or excuse.

I have in the handling of these a little altered the method, and spake of the two first and the last. Now followeth the third, and that is consciences bond, which is Gods law : *which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, &c.* It is onely the work of Gods law that it beareth witness of, that it accuseth or excuseth for : The law of God is consciences bond. Neverthelesse we must here distinguish : The bonds of conscience are either primarie and supreme, or secundarie and relative.

The bond of conscience is Gods law.

1. The primarie and supreme bond of conscience is onely Gods word and law : that onely is the supreme bond of conscience : *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save or to destroy: who art thou that judgest another ?* that is, There is but one supreme lawgiver to bind the consciences of men, and that is God. And the reason

is

is given, Because it is God onely who is able to save and to destroy. As if he had said, God onely hath power over life and death, either to save a man for ever, or destroy a man for ever, and to judge a man according to all that he hath done : and therefore he onely can make laws to bind the consciences of men.

2. Now the secundarie or relative bond of conscience is, when others who have authoritie from God bind conscience to this or that. I call this a relative bond, because it is onely in relation to the authoritie of God. For though men cannot challenge any doings or omissions contrarie to their law to be finnes, yet if they have authoritie from God to command any thing, then they become beams and parts of Gods law, and do by virtue of that bind a mans conscience.

This relative bond of conscience is twofold. First, other men may bind our consciences ; as magistrates , and masters , and parents : who though they cannot bind conscience as they are men, yet when they have authoritie from God, their commands have Gods seals upon them, and do bind, I say, in relation to Gods law, which biddeth us obey them ; Rom. 13. 5. *Ye must needs be subject, not onely for wrath but also for conscience sake.* The Apostle there speaketh of Magistrates ; and he telleth us that their laws bind our consciences in relation to Gods, and therefore we must be subject unto them for conscience sake. Thus others may bind our consciences. Secondly, we our selves may bind our own consciences ; and that is by vows which

which we make unto God, or by our promises which we lawfully make unto men. The vows which we freely make unto God, these bind conscience to keep them : Numb. 30. 4. the vow of a woman is called *the bond wherewith she hath bound her soul*. Mark ; she bindeth her soul and her conscience with it. So the promises which we lawfully make unto men, these also bind conscience : For though before we promise it was in our own power, yet when we have promised we have bound our own consciences to the performance, because there is Gods seal upon it ; Gods law commandeth us to be true of our words. These are relative bonds, bonds onely in relation to Gods law : Gods law is still the supreme bond of conscience. I will handle that first.

I. The law of God whereby he willeth and commandeth and forbiddeth this or that in his word, this is the main bond of conscience : When this bindeth it, nothing else can loose it ; and contrary, if this loose it, nothing else can bind it. It so bindeth conscience as the observing and violating of it is that which maketh conscience clear or guilty before God. This is it which maketh a man a debtour ; *I am a debtour*, saith Paul, *both* Rom. 1. 14. *to the Grecians and to the Barbarians* : that is, I am bound in conscience by Gods command to preach the Gospel unto both. This is it that denominateth a man to be bound : *I go bound in the* Acts 19. 32. *spirit unto Jerusalem* ; that is, I knowing it to be Gods will am bound in conscience to go. This is that which layeth a necessity upon a man ; *A necessity is laid upon me to preach* ; i. I am 16 *bound in conscience by Gods word so to do.* 1. Cor. 9. 16.

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ence.

This is that which layeth a kind of enforcement upon men ; *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard* ; that is, If we should not, our consciences would flie in our faces : We are bound by Gods will to do so, and our consciences lay a charge upon us that we cannot go against it. The onely will and word of almighty God is that which supremely bindeth conscience.

Reasons

1. Because God onely knoweth the heart ; he seeth our thoughts, and he onely can reach to the secrets of our spirits ; and therefore he onely can bind our conscience. For who else can tell whether we make conscience of a thing yea or no ? perhaps we do, perhaps we do not. Nor man nor angel can tell certainly : but God knoweth certainly, and he onely ; and therefore he onely can bind our consciences. When the Lord doth command or forbid, the conscience is privy that God seeth it ; and therefore now it is bound.
- Heb. 4. 12. The word of God is quick and powerfull ; it pierceth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* This bindeth a mans thoughts and intentions ; he cannot be free in these things : and the reason is given by the Apostle ; *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* As if he had said, We are conscious of Gods all-seeing power ; he seeth our hearts and our thoughts and all that is in us : and therefore his word doth bind us, yea it bindeth all our secrets : we cannot think a vain thought but our conscience will crie guiltie before God, because our conscience doth know that
- God

God knoweth all. Besides, the conscience cannot fear any law but onely Gods law. Ye know when conscience is once in a doubt, it is fearfull, and beginneth to ask questions with it self, *May I do this? or may I not do it? asking no questions for conscience sake.* The conscience when it doubteth useth to ask questions. Now this supposeth the lawgiver to be able to see it: otherwise the conscience would not be thus afraid, if it were onely the commandment of a creature, that could not search the heart. So that here ye see one reason why Gods law is the supreme bond of conscience; Because no eye can see it but Gods.

2. Because God onely hath power over conscience: It is his commandment onely that maketh any thing sinne or not sinne unto us. Augustine defineth sinne to be *A thought, or word, or deed, or lust against the commandment of God.* Against thee, against thee onely have I sinned, saith David. He saith he had sinned onely against God. *Why?* you will say, *he sinned also against man: Did not he commit adulterie? that was a sinne against Bathsheba: and murder? that was a sinne against Uriah.* True, he sinned against man relatively, in relation to the commandment which saith, *Thou shalt not injure thy neighbour:* but primarily and principally the sinne was against God. Conscience is like the kings servant, whom none can arrest or attach without leave from the king: so no man can bind conscience without leave had from God: for conscience is onely subject to his power: he onely hath power over conscience.

3. Because conscience is Gods book. Now n creature can adde to Gods book or diminish from it. Ye may remember that dreadfull anathema at the end of Gods book ; *If any man shall adde to this book, God shall adde to him the plagues that are written in this book : And if any man shall diminish from this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.* Now conscience is also Gods book wherein his law is written. Nay, conscience is called *Gods law*.

Rev. 22, 18. For it is said, that *when the Gentiles which have not the law do the things contained in the law, they having not the law are a law unto themselves* : that is, Their conscience is Gods law unto them. Like as the Bible containeth Gods law for us Christians, so did their consciences contain the law of God to them : yea, to us Christians much rather : For we are not to let Gods law be written onely in our Bibles, but we must get it written in our consciences : our consciences are to be Gods books wherein his laws are to be written. And therefore if it be a sinne to adde a new law in the materiall book to bind men, then it must needs be a sinne for any creature to put a new law into conscience, which is the spirituall book of God. It is God onely who can write laws in this book : his book is above all the laws in the world ; and none but God can put in and put out : and therefore none but he can bind conscience. I speake still of this absolute, and supreme bond of conscience : For Magistrates may bind relatively ; but not as they are their laws, but by the law of God before made. Thus ye see the necessity of this truth, That

Gods

Gods law is the absolute and supreme bond of conscience.

Uses.

1. This serveth to direct Ministers how to *use* 1. convince the consciences of their people. If Ministers desire to work upon their hearers, they must speak to the conscience; they must shew them Gods authority, that it is Gods will and Gods command. Tell conscience never so much, that we should do thus or thus upon other grounds and inducements, it starteth not at that, except it be convinced by the word of God that it is Gods will, the commandment of the great God of heaven, the God of the spirits of all flesh, who will look for our obedience: This maketh conscience to startle, this affecteth it and bindeth it. St Paul when he said that he *approved himself and his preaching to mens consciences*, what followeth? *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that perish*, &c. As if he had said, This maketh all the world to startle, except they be reprobates and men delivered over to Satan. It is easie to see what ministerie affecteth most and doeth the most good in the hearts of the people, namely that which bringeth the clearest voice of Gods Spirit calling to obedience and binding the conscience. They can heare with ease and great pleasure the sermons of those whose doctrines are stuffed with humane discourses. Learning and policie never pierce conscience. Nay, let carnall preachers preach never so much against peoples sinnes, they can make a sport of it, though they heare their sinnes with humane

learning declaimed against. When the preacher doth not clearly preach the Lords voyce, though he rip up sinne, yet if it be not in the demonstration of the Spirit of God, and shewing his clear authority, the heart will not be affected. Conscience knoweth when it is bound, and when it is but dallied and jested with : And therefore if Ministers desire to have their ministerie work upon the hearts of their people, they must shew them Gods authority, and confirm it by his word, and let them see that it is the commandment of the Lord, that which will one day judge them. *Let him know*, saith Paul, *that the things that I write are the commandments of the Lord.* It is the Lord of heaven and earth that biddeth thee yield, and commandeth thee to give over thy base lusts : It is he in whose hands thy breath is ; thou hadst best be obedient. I tell thee, thy conscience observeth it ; and if thou wilt not obey, it will rore like the roring of the sea one day against thee, and sting thee like a scorpion. The things that thou hearest, know thou that they are the commandments of God ; and if thou disobey, thou dost disobey not men but God.

1 Cor. 14. 37.

Use 2,

2. Is it so that the word of God onely is the supreme bond of conscience ? Then this teacheth us to have an eye to Gods word in that which we do, if we would satisfie conscience. I say, have an eye to Gods word : not onely to do that which it may be is in Gods word ; conscience counteth that to be nothing : but to have an eye to Gods word. Conscience will not be satisfied with any obedience that we do if we have

have not an eye to Gods word. Whatever we have an eye to besides, conscience knoweth it is nothing, if in all we have not an eye to the commandment of God : Though we do obey it, conscience looketh upon it as if we did not obey it. It is onely Gods commandment and authoritie that bindeth conscience : and therefore nothing satisfieth conscience unlesse we have an eye unto that. If we do not aim at Gods will in doing what we do, conscience counteth our obedience as no obedience at all. As for example ; Ye that are husbands, ye love your wives: but is it because God commandeth it ? It may be ye love them because they love you, or because your affections are to them : Alas, this is nothing : Pagans and reprobates can do so. But do ye aim at the doing of Gods will, who commandeth you ? O say you, *The Lord doth command me, I do it.* What of that ? Do ye look at his commandment when ye do it ? If not ; be humbled, and know ye must get grace to do so, or ye are not obedient to God, neither will conscience set it down for obedience. Ye that are servants, ye serve your masters : but do ye aim at Gods will ? thus, *O the Lord hath commanded me to be faithfull and painfull in my service.* Doth your soul look to this ? It may be ye serve them because they are kind, and because they pay you your wages, and the like : This is nothing to conscience : conscience looketh at the commandment of God ; and if your souls do not aim at the commandment of God, it will not satisfie conscience. Ye that are neighbours, it may be ye love one another, and be friends

one with another : but doth your soul look at Gods commandment ? is it because God hath commanded us to love one another ? People seldom aim at God in these cases : They are friends with their neighbours : why ? Their neighbours are friends with them. But they do not trouble their thoughts to aim at Gods commandment in it. Let me tell you ; Conscience will not count this obedience : For conscience feeleth no bond but Gods word : and if ye do not look at that, it is no obedience with conscience ; conscience will never acquit you or absolve you for this ; it accounteth of this obedience as no obedience at all. See 1. Cor. 10. 25. and so forward. There the Apostle handling that question of conscience, at last concludeth, *Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glorie of God*, vers. 31. Let your hearts look at that, and aim at that ; in whatsoever ye do, still look at God : all is lost with conscience else. Though ye eat never so soberly, and drink never so moderately, pray never so duly, conscience counteth it all nothing if ye do not look at God : It is God onely and his word that doth bind it ; and it will never give a discharge except your hearts look at him.

Use 3.

3. This serveth to confute our Antinomists, such as say the law of God bindeth not the conscience of the regenerate. Ye see here that the law of God bindeth the conscience : and therefore if the regenerate have any conscience at all, (as certainly they have the best conscience of all men) then it must needs bind their conscience. We confesse the conscience of the regenerate

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rate is freed from many things by Christ. First, it is freed from the yoke and bondage of the ceremonial law, Gal. 5. 1. *Stand fast in the libertie wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage.* Every mans conscience is freed from that yoke of the ceremonial law, because it ended in Christ. Secondly, the conscience of the regenerate is freed from seeking justification by the deeds of the law. Indeed the first covenant was by the works of the law; *He that doeth them shall live in them*: But the second covenant speaketh better things; *He that believeth shall be saved.* It is true, if God had not sent his Sonne we must have sought justification by the works of the law: Though it were impossible to find it by reason of our finnes, yet conscience was bound that way. But now that Christ Jesus hath sealed up a new covenant in his own blood, conscience is freed from that former: Rom. 3. 28. *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* For though justifying faith never be without the sincere doing of the law, yet the deeds of the law have no influence into justification: Conscience is freed from seeking justification thereby. Thirdly, the conscience of the regenerate is freed from the rigour of the law. They are bound in conscience to use the law as a rule of their life, and in sinceritie to obey it; but are not bound by the gospel to the rigour of it: that they are freed from; and so they *are not under the law but under grace.* I grant that all carnall people, who are yet out of Christ, do all

From what
Christians
are freed.

Rom. 6. 14.

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lie under the rigour of the law : and as long as they submit not to Jesus Christ, nor get into him, they are bound in conscience to keep it, though they cannot : They cannot sinne in one rittle, but conscience will condemne them before God. They shall be condemned for every vain thought, for every idle word, for every the least sinne, for every the least lust, for any the least omission of good. They lie under the rigour of the law, and they are bound in conscience to keep it, and they shall be countable for every transgression, because they are under the law. But the conscience of the regenerate is free from this rigour, because they are under grace, and therefore they are *delivered from the law* : The Lord hath deliverd them by the body of Christ ; and therefore they are not bound by the gospel to all that obedience that the law in rigour requireth. Fourthly, the conscience of the regenerate is freed from the curse of the morall law. For though the law doth condemne, yet their conscience needeth not fear it, because they are in Christ : *There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.* Indeed those that are not regenerate, not ingrafted into Christ, they are still in the mouth of the gunshot : the law doth condemne them, and they have no shelter, and their conscience is bound by it ; and they shall find one day that by it their conscience will condemne them to hell. It may be now for the present their conscience is quiet, and they choke it, and so it letteth them alone : yet they are condemned in conscience,

Rom. 7. 6.

Rom. 8. 1.

conscience, and one day they shall find it. But the regenerate are by Christ freed in conscience from all this condemnation. Thus farre we grant.

But the Antinomists and I know not what Antinomists Marcionites would have more. They cannot abide to heare that a regenerate person is bound to any sincere obedience to Gods law as the rule of their life: They crie out against the morall law as once the Babylonians did against Jerusalem, *Down with it, down with it even to the ground: O ye do not preach Christ if ye talk of the law.* Beloved, these are drunken opinions, fitter to be preached among drunkards and Epicures and monsters then among the peculiar ones of God. The law of God doth bind the conscience of all the people of God, so that they are bound to make it a rule of life. Nay the Scripture calleth it *Christs bond* whereby he bindeth his people to him: *The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds, and cast away their cords from us. Tush, we will not be tied by his laws, nor be so precisely strait-laced with such commandments as these.* Here the laws of the Lord are called *bonds* and *cords*: Gods people are bound to him by them: But the wicked they stand out and refuse to be bound. Now if the law be called a *bond*, I pray what bond is it, but of conscience? It is not a bond like a prisoners fetters, to be put about their legs: This is a spirituall bond that bindeth the conscience, But let me prove it to you by arguments.

arguments. There be fundrie arguments to prove it.

Arguments.
That Gods
law bindeth
the consci-
ence of the
regenerate.

Arg. 1.
Luke 17. 10.

First, That which hath power to say to the conscience of the regenerate, *This is thy dutie, and this must be done*, that bindeth the conscience : But the law of God hath power to say thus to the conscience, *This is your dutie*. Who can tell better then Christ ? *When ye have done all these things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants ; we have done that which was our dutie to do*. Mark ; He speaketh of Gods law, *things commanded* : now the law is nothing else but a catalogue of those things that God hath commanded us. *When ye have done all these things*, saith our Saviour, *know it is your dutie*. Here ye see the law hath power to say to the conscience, *This is your dutie*. But ye will object, *We are under faith ; and do ye tell us of law* ? I answer, as Chrysostome answereth out of Paul, *Do we then make void the law through faith* ? God forbid : *Yea, we establish the law*. See how the Apostle doth abhorre this thought : *God forbid*, saith he. As if he had said, *Farre be it from me to teach such an abominable doctrine* : No, no ; *we establish the law*. Heare what Christ saith himself, *Think not that I am come to destroy the law : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill it*. O thought some, *If we believe in Christ then we hope we shall have done with the law*. No, no : saith Christ ; *ye shall as soon pull the heavens and the earth out of their place as disannull one tittle of the law*.

Arg. 2.

Secondly, That which hath this authoritie that

that the breach of it is a sinne, bindeth conscience : but the law hath this authoritie, that neither regenerate nor unregenerate can transgresse it but they sinne : therefore the law bindeth their consciences. For the regenerate and all are bound in conscience to take heed of sinne : *Who-^{1. John 1.}soever committeth sinne transgresseth also the^{3. 4.} law.* David was a regenerate man ; yet when he had defiled Bathsheba, *I have sinned*, saith he. Joseph was a regenerate man ; yet confesseth, if he should transgresse the Lords commandment, he should sinne : *How shall I do this great wickednesse, and so sinne against God ?* But ye will object, This is old testament. What of that ? I hope you will not take up the old damned heresie again of the Cerdonians, and Cainites, and Apellites, and Manichees, and Severians, and other such cursed hereticks condemned by the Church of God : Their heresie was, To hedge out the regenerate from the old testament. And St Augustine proved it against them, That the morall law of God was ever the rule of obedience, and shall so continue with the gospel to the end of the world ; and every transgression thereof is sinne. The breach of the ceremoniall law was a sinne once ; but now it is not : because once it bound the conscience ; now it doth not : But the breach of the morall law is still sinne : therefore still it bindeth the conscience. Do ye not remember what St James saith now under the Gospel ? he presseth it yet on mens consciences : *He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not^{James. 2. 11.} kill. Now though thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the*

the law. And though ye may call it *a law of liberty* in what sense ye please, yet he telleth you, Ye had best look to your words and deeds : for ye must be judged by this law of liberty : *So speak ye and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*

Arg. 3. Thirdly, That which being observed doth cause the conscience of the regenerate to excuse, and being transgressed to accuse, that bindeth their conscience : (For what else do you make *binding* of conscience but this ?) But the law of God being observed doth cause the conscience to excuse ; being transgressed, to accuse ; *In many things we sinne all,* saith the Apostle. Mark ; Our consciences do accuse us : as we do sinne in many things, so our consciences do accuse us when we do so. *I am a sinfull man,* saith S^t Peter, Luke 5. 8. His conscience did accuse him of sinne.

Arg. 4. Fourthly, That which is the condition of Gods covenant of grace bindeth the conscience, yea of the regenerate : but sincere obedience to Gods law is a condition of Gods covenant of grace. See Luke 1. 72. *To remember his holy covenant, and the oath that he sware that he would give us, That being delivered out of the hands of our enemies we might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the dayes of our life.* Mark ; Sincere and universall obedience is a condition of the covenant of grace, not onely for a manifestation to our selves that we are truly justified ; as these upstart patritians do hold : but it is the condition of the covenant of grace. Every covenant hath its conditions annexed

nexed ; and therefore it is called *the book of the covenant*, Exod. 24. 7. *the words of the covenant*, Exod. 34. 28. *the tables of the covenant*, Deut. 9. 11. The reason is this ; Because when a covenant is made, the conditions are put into a book or a table and expressed in words. Onely here is the difference between the first covenant of works and the second covenant of grace : Both have conditions ; but here, I say, is the difference ; In the one grace giveth the covenant, and grace giveth the condition of the covenant ; but a condition is annexed though : Now hence we may argue (and none but enemies to the Gospel can denie it) If the covenant of grace do bind a mans conscience, then certainly the condition of the covenant bindeth a mans conscience too : But the covenant of grace bindeth the conscience of the regenerate ; and therefore the condition of it bindeth. If you ask, What is this to obedience ? the answer is, That obedience is the condition of the covenant of grace, as the forenamed Scripture expresseth, Luke 1. 72. Thus ye see the law of God bindeth the conscience of all the regenerate. This is the third Use.

4. Hath the word of God supreme power to *Use 4.* bind conscience ? Then hence we may learn, that no creature can dispense with it, nor free conscience from guilt when a man transgresseth the word. What a damned usurpation is it in the Pope to offer to dispense ? The Canonists say he may dispense *de praeceptis veteris & novi testamenti*, (They are their own words) *he may dispense with the commandments of the old and new testament.* He dispensed with king Henry the

Azorius
the Jesuite
reports it.

Psal. 119.
89.

the eighth, and undertook to free his conscience from guilt though he married his own brothers wife. Gregorie the second undertook to free subjects from being bound in their consciences to keep their oaths of allegiance to Leo the Emperour. O these are damned aspirings; and they plainly declare him to be Antichrist, who exalteth himself in this manner. The word of God is the supreme binder of conscience: And therefore not all the Angels in heaven can dispense with one idle word. *For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.* Gods word is settled for ever in heaven; and therefore ye may assoon remove the heaven from its place as one tittle of the word from binding conscience. Doth the word say thus or thus? thou hadst best do it: If thou wilt not, all the whole world cannot help thee; thy conscience will condemne thee at the day of judgement without remedie. Hath the word convinced thee of thy sinnes, and made thy conscience say, *I am a sinner, and am guiltie before God?* I tell thee then, Thy conscience is bound, and all the world cannot loose it. But hast thou been humbled and empried of thy self, and doth the word pronounce pardon of thy sinnes in Christs name, that thy conscience can say, *The Lord speaketh peace to my soul?* I tell thee, Thou art loosed, and nor hell nor devil nor sinne nor flesh nor any thing can bind thee. Ye may see the power of Gods word in that speech of our Saviour, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven,* Matth. 18. 18. That is, My word which ye preach is of that nature, that if that loose your conscience, it is loosed indeed,

and

and nothing can bind it; if that do bind it, it is bound soundly indeed, and nothing can loose it. O this is a terrour to the wicked! Doth the word of God say, *He that hardneth his neck, being often rebuked, shall suddenly be destroyed, and cannot be cured?* O fear and tremble ye that harden your necks against the reproofs of the Almighty: his word bindeth over your consciences to Christs barre. Doth the word say, *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge?* If thou beest such an one, thy conscience is bound with this word, and it will apply it to the soul before the tribunal-seat of Christ. Doth the word crie out against any of thy courtesies? thy conscience is bound as with chains, and it is not all thy vain hopes and excuses can loose thee. Again, this is comfort to the godly: Gods word is the supreme binder of conscience. O ye blessed of the Lord, the word of God tieth such a fast knot to your comforts that all hell cannot open it with their teeth: The word of the Lord Jesus is with you, *who hath the key of David, that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.* Yea, but sayest thou, *My sinnes are against me:* What then? mark what the word saith, *We have an Advocate with the Father:* Thy conscience is bound to believe that. *Yea, but I have a very naughty heart, and I cannot tell what to do with it:* Mark what the word saith; *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved:* This bindeth thy conscience. *But I offend dayly:* Mark still what the word saith; *Christ bringeth in everlasting righteousness.* If thou beest unworthy to day, there is righteousness for thee to day; if unworthy

Prov. 29.1.

Dan. 9. 24

worthy to morrow, there is righteousness for thee to morrow ; if unworthy for ever, there is righteousness for thee for ever. This is Gods word, and thy portion ; this bindeth thy conscience to lay hold on it. *But I have abundantly sinned* : What saith Christs word ? *I will abundantly pardon.* O what comfort is this to every poore soul which the Lord Jesus hath humbled ! His word is the supreme binder of conscience, above the law, above justice, above threatnings, above all the world besides. His promising word is the supreme binder of thy conscience, if thou beest one of Christs : And therefore fear not ; onely believe, and be thankfull, and give glory to God. This is the childrens bread ; no stranger can intermeddle with it.

The secondary bond of conscience.

YE have heard that the bonds of conscience are of two sorts : First, there is a supreme bond of conscience, and that is Gods word : of which I have already spoken. Secondly, there is a relative bond of conscience, which bindeth conscience indeed, but it is onely in relation to Gods word, because Gods word putteth authority upon it. And this latter is also of two sorts : 1. Others may bind conscience ; 2. We our selves may bind our own consciences.

1. Others may bind our consciences.

1. Others may bind our consciences, namely, when they have authority conferred upon them from God, and so their laws and commands receive vigour and force from Gods laws. Thus the laws

laws and commands of Magistrates bind the conscience of People ; of Parents bind the conscience of Children ; of Masters bind the conscience of Servants : For though they do not bind conscience as they are the commandments of men, yet having Gods seal and authority upon them they do. I will set down some conclusions whereby ye may know how farre the laws and commandments of others bind or not bind conscience.

1. Conclusion.

1. Magistrates have power to command us. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers : for there is no power but of God ; and the powers that be are ordained of God, Rom. 13. 1.* That chapter doth most clearly prove this conclusion unto us.

Out of the first part of the chapter we learn, 1. That Magistrates have power and authority to make laws, and to establish orders among men; and therefore they are called *powers* : 2. We learn that these laws of Magistrates receive strength and force from the law of God : *For the powers that be are ordained of God,* saith the text. 3. Those laws made by the Magistrate and confirmed by God have power to bind conscience, vers. 5. *Wherefore we must be subject not onely because of wrath but also for conscience sake.* And the violating of them is sinne. When their authority is confirmed by God, we cannot *resist them* but we *resist the ordinance of God*, saith the Apostle: nay, we may pull *condemnation upon us* if we do; *They that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation*, vers. 2. So that this first conclusion

tellecth us what laws of men are to be obeyed ;
viz. 1. Such as do virtually flow from Gods
 word, though not expressely commanded in it ;
 2. Such as are good and wholesome and profita-
 ble for the common-wealth : These though they
 are not particularly commanded in Gods word,
 yet are they by virtue of it injoynd : and there-
 fore to neglect them and be disobedient unto
 them, is to neglect and be disobedient to God.
 Again, so farre onely are they to be obeyed (so
 farre onely, I say) as they virtually do flow from
 Gods word : for so farre onely they receive force
 from Gods law. This is the first conclusion.

2. *Conclusion.*

2. The commandments of Magistrates and
 those that are in authoritie lose their power of
 binding the conscience in foure cases :

1. When they command that which though
 in it self it be not simply and absolutely sinfull
 and unlawfull, yet it doth put us upon a necessity
 of sinning : As for example, If a Magistrate com-
 mand single life to all Ministers, this thing is not
 in it self simply unlawfull (for it is lawfull to
 marry, and it is lawfull not to marry) yet this
 commandment is unlawfull, because it would put
 Ministers upon a necessity of sinning : The reason
 is, because all have not this power. And there-
 fore such a commandment as this would not bind
 conscience : For the conscience cannot be bound
 to impurity, or an apparent danger of impurity :
 and therefore though the thing be not simply un-
 lawfull, yet the commandment is simply unlaw-
 full, and doth not bind conscience. The Apostle
 maketh

'maketh such a commandment to argue a seared conscience in the commander : and therefore none but a seared conscience can think it is bound by it, 1. Tim. 4. 2, 3.

2. The commandments of Magistrates lose their power of binding the conscience when they command things that are unlawfull in themselves and contrary to the word of God. In this case they do not bind conscience, because Gods seal is not on them. We have an example of this in the three blessed children; Who when the king commanded them to worship the image that he had set up, they did not conceive themselves bound in conscience to obey : they would rather suffer torment then obey it. So also Daniel, when he was commanded not to ask any petition of God for thirty dayes space, but onely of the king, Daniel did not conceive himself bound in conscience, nay he chose rather to be cast into the den of lions then obey. In this case *Den. 3. 16.* the answer of the Apostles is necessary ; who when they were commanded not to preach any more in the name of the Lord Jesus, thus they answered, *Whether it be right in the sight of God to obey men rather then God, judge ye.*

3. When mens laws and commands overthrow the libertie of Christianitie, that Christian libertie which Christ hath purchased for us, then they lose their power of binding the conscience. But here I must tell you of a caution ; *viz.* That this libertie may be considered in a double respect : 1. In regard of it self, the libertie it self ; 2. In regard of the exercise or use of this libertie. Now there is a very great

Rom. 14. 14.

difference between these two considerations ; as there is a great difference between a mans having a sword and a mans wearing a sword. The Magistrate may restrain a man from wearing a sword at such or such a time, though he do not take his sword from him : so there is difference between the having our libertie and the using our libertie. There is a libertie purchased for Gods children, whereby all things are become lawfull unto them : *All things are lawfull unto me*, saith Paul 1. Cor. 6. 12. *and there is nothing evil in it self* : (he speaketh of indifferent things.) Gods children are freed from the observation of meats, and drinks, and times , and garments. Now whatsoever commandment is made by the Magistrate contrarie to this libertie doth not bind conscience : for nothing can blind conscience when Christ doth loose it : Yet there may be a restraint of the use of this libertie : as for example, the Magistrate may command us to forbear some kinds of meats at some certain times ; and so also for garments, and the like : namely, when the doctrine about meats and drinks and garments is pure. And therefore in such a case the command of the Magistrate bindeth the conscience ; otherwise not.

4. When they command things indifferent to be absolutely necessarie , to make them idolatrous or superstitious, then in this case they are unlawfull and bind not the conscience to obey them. But when are they idolatrous ? I answer ; 1. When they are commanded either as absolutely necessarie to Christianitie, to the very being of religion and the worship of God, and with

with as much necessitie as holinesse it self, then they are made superstitious and idolatrous: And in this case the caveat of S^t John is strongly to be kept, *Babes, keep your selves from idoles.* 1. John 5. 21.

2. When they are commanded as things meritorious, as pleasing to God for themselves, and to merit of him, then they are idolatrous.

3. When they are commanded for the substanti-
all perfection of religion, as though religion were imperfect without them, then they are made idolatrous, and lose their virtue of binding the conscience. But all such commands of things that are indifferent, which are commanded without respect to make them idolatrous, they may be obeyed. This is our second conclusion.

3. Conclusion.

3. Those laws and commandments of Magistrates which want the authoritie of Gods law to confirm them (and therefore bind not the conscience) ought not to be disobeyed for all that with scandal or contempt and by unreverent slighting or despising the Magistrate or his laws. He must be acknowledged a Magistrate under God for all that: 1. Tim. 2. 1, 2. *Exhort that supplications be made for Kings and those that are in authoritie.* He speaketh there of heathen Kings; yet he calleth them *Kings*, and saith they *have authoritie*: and we ought to pray for them: and therefore how much more when Kings and Magistrates subscribe to Christian religion? Nay, though they command that which is utterly unlawfull, we must not rise

up against them: for if we do, we rise up against God. We must obey them one way or other, either actively or passively: When they command that which is lawfull for us to do, we must obey them by doing: when they command that which is unlawfull for us to do, and threaten punishment, then we cannot actively obey them by doing, because they command against God; yet we must passively obey by suffering and submitting to their penalties, because the Lord hath given them authority over us. This is our third conclusion,

4. Conclusion.

4. Those laws of Magistrates which by Gods law do not bind conscience, do yet in matter of scandal bind us to obedience. If the Magistrate shall command any thing beyond his power to command yet not unlawfull for us to do, though such a command do not bind to obedience in case of conscience, yet in case of scandal it doth. Thus Christ was content to pay tribute though he needed not to have done it: *The children*, saith he, *are free*: neverthelesse, lest he should offend the Magistrate, he did pay it. I will put an example of another nature; In a private wrong, though we are not expressly bound to it, yet rather then scandalously to contend, conscience doth bind us to yield. Needed Abraham to have condescended so farre unto Lot as to let him take his choice before him? No rather then scandal of religion should arise, ye may read that he did it. Thus I have briefly made it manifest how farre the commands of the Magistrate do

not

Math. 17.
27.

not bind conscience, and how farre they do.

Objections.

1. But it may be objected ; Conscience hath *Obj. 1.*
onely relation to God.

I answer, It is true, as the supreme and abso- *Answ.*
lute binder of conscience : but it hath a relation
also unto men in the second place, inasmuch as
God putteth upon men such terms as conscience
hath relation to, Acts 24. 16. *Herein I have al-*
wayes endeavoured my self, to have alwayes a
clear conscience both towards God and towards
men. Mark ; Conscience hath relation to both :
For though it have its main relation to God
and his word, yet in him it hath relation unto
men.

2. Again it may be replied ; The Magistrates *Obj. 2.*
do not undertake, nor can they, to meddle with
mens invisible spirits ; for they are not able to see
whether the spirit of man be obedient or no : and
therefore how do their laws bind us in conscience.
The Magistrate onely looketh at the bodie :
mens thoughts and affections and consciences are
naked onely to God.

It is true, the Magistrate doth not undertake *Answ.*
but onely to bind the outward man : neverthe-
lesse the conscience of the subject feeleth it self to
be bound to obedience under pain of sinning
against God, who giveth this generall precept,
Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for 1. Pet. 2. 13.
the Lords sake, to the King, &c. The consci-
ence feeleth this, and so it cometh to be bound.

3. Again it may be replied ; The conscience is *Obj. 3.*
not bound but onely by way of religion. If I
make

make conscience of a thing, then I make a matter of religion of it : but what religion is there in the commandments of Magistrates ? suppose the Magistrate commandeth us to get our armour in readinesse, to mend our high-ways, to moderate expenses at nuptials, or the like ; these are civill things and not religious, and therefore how can they bind conscience ? We make conscience onely of religion and the worship of God.

Answ.

Such laws do not bind conscience under the name of religion, but under the name of civil discipline. And again, though they do not bind conscience *per se* and immediately, yet they do *per aliud* and as subjoyned to an higher law. For though the breach of such laws be onely a civil fault in it self, yet in another respect it may be a morall sinne, if the powers that are ordained of God be neglected and disobeyed. And therefore though the conscience do not regard civil laws as they are civil ; neither do we make conscience of them as they are civil : yet as they are made by the minister of God, and backed by his authoritie which the Lord hath set on them, so they do take hold of conscience ; and not to perform them is contrarie to justice and charitie and the profit and safetie of the commonwealth, and so a sinne.

Uses.

Use 1.

1. This confuteth the Anabaptists, who denie that any obedience is to be given to the secular power. Ye see here that the laws of Magistrates have Gods seal upon them ; and therefore we must yield obedience unto them : for they bind in conscience,

conscience. Again, this confuteth the Papiſts, who teach that their Popes laws and commandments are of ſupreme authoritie, and require equall ſubmiſſion of ſpirit with Gods laws : and alſo that the omiſſion of them is death and damnation. Our doctrine and religion goeth between both : For we teach that Gods authoritie is onely ſupreme, and that he onely can make laws under pain of death and damnation ; and that the authoritie of Magiſtrates is ſecondarie, and ſecondarie obedience is to be given unto them. The Papiſts ſpeak blaſphemie in ſaying their Pope can make laws under pain of damnation to be kept : Our Saviour Chriſt maketh this a proper- tie onely of God ; *Fear not him that can kill the bodie, and there is all that he can do : but fear him who can caſt both bodie and ſoul into hell : I ſay unto you, Fear him, Luke 12. 4.* As if he had ſaid, Men can reach no further then the bodie, and their puniſhments can go no further then the death of the bodie.

2. This teacheth us what to do if men ſhould *uſe* 2. command any thing which is unlawfull for us to perform : (Suppose there ſhould be any ſuch humane commands as are repugnant to Gods.) In this caſe ye ſee we muſt obey God rather then men ; nay, ſuffer loſſe of goods, loſſe of libertie, yea loſſe of life, rather then obey the commandments of men in caſe they be contrarie to the commandments of God. Ye may reade a lamentable example in Ephraim ; They were utterly deſtroyed for obeying their King rather then their God : The King commanded to worſhip the calves, and to go unto Bethel and not to Jeruſalem

rusalem to worship : they yielded to his commandment, and did so ; O thought they, *We shall displease the King if we do not.* For this sinne of theirs they were broken in judgement, Hos. 5. 11. *Ephraim is destroyed and broken in judgement, because he willingly walked after the commandment.* Beloved, Gods commandment is soveraigne, and the supreme binder of conscience: Whatever commandment is repugnant to Gods word, w^{ch} to us if we do it ; nay, though it be to save our goods or our lives. It is true, we must *give to Cesar the things that are Cessars* ; but so as withall we must be sure to *give to God the things that are Gods.*

Use. 3.

3. This comforteth Gods people against the calumnies and slanders of wicked and ungodly men that upbraide them for their obedience to God. O say they, *Ye are irregular and despisers of authoritie.* I say, this is comfort to the godly, that God is able to bear them out in obeying him rather then men. Gods word is the supreme binder of conscience ; and therefore, whatever men think of such, they are absolutely bound to obey God. If men command us against the word of God, we know their authoritie is the ordinance of God ; and therefore if they go beyond that, they do not bind us in conscience. If God had not bound us in conscience to him, others might have taken it ill if we should not obey them : but now what cause have others to think ill of us ? What folly were it in us to seek to please men and to displease God ? If we were at libertie, then we might choose whom we would obey : but now we are bound unto God, and must

must be obedient unto God, whatever men command to the contrarie, let us do it therefore with chearfulnesse. By this we shew our submission to God; by this we satisfie conscience, which being bound unto God doth continually urge us to obey him. Why should we omit part of the exactnesse of our obedience which the word of God doth require? We have more to do then ever we shall be able to perform: we should therefore be carefull to do all that we may. By our obedience to God in this kind we convince the conscience of others of our uprightness towards God: Though through the overruling dominion of their lusts and passions they rage at us, and their mouthes speak evil of us, yet we may have an evidence in their consciences within which may testifie for us: their consciences will whisper within them, *Surely they do well to please God rather then men:* their consciences will be on our side, though their actions and tongues be against us. We have a notable example of this Acts 4. 15, 16. When the rulers of the Jews had threatned the Apostles, and had reviled them with many bitter words, and had bidden them go aside for a while, then they concluded among themselves, *Surely an evident signe is done by them, and we cannot deny it:* So that their consciences acquitted them for good men. So when the wicked of this world have spoken evil of the wayes of the righteous, and blasphemed the holy name after which they are named: yet when they are alone, and their consciences at counsel within themselves, then they conclude,

Indeed

Indeed they do well. Thus their consciences give a good evidence of us, and accuse them for not doing the like. And thus much shall suffice to be spoken of other mens binding of conscience.

II. *We may bind our own consciences.*

II. We our selves may bind our own consciences : And that is by those vows and promises which we make to God of any thing lawfull and in our power. Those vows and promises which we make unto God according to the warrant of his word they do bind our conscience. They are our own before we have made them : as Ananias and Sapphira their gift was their own before they vowed it to the church : *While it remained was it not thine own ? and when it was sold, was it not in thine own power ?* Acts 5. 4. We need not vow unlesse we will : but after we have vowed our vows are Gods bonds, and do bind the conscience to the performance of them. Nay, we *lie unto God*, as the text saith they did, if we do not stand to the performance of them.

But it may be demanded, What vows are they which are unlawfull, and do not bind conscience ? I answer ;

1. Such as we make of things impossible and beyond our power : These are unlawfull, and do not bind conscience.

2. Such as we make of things unlawfull ; when we vow to do that which is contrarie to Gods law : such as Davids was when he vowed the destruction of Nabals familie: This doth not bind conscience: nay, we are bound in conscience to break it.

3. Such

3. Such as though they be of things lawfull and possible, yet we want freedome in the performance of them : as for a wife or a servant or a child to make a vow, when their relation to such as are over them will not suffer them to perform it : This bindeth not conscience. Num. 30. 3. Nothing bindeth conscience but that which hath Gods seal upon it : but this hath not Gods seal on it ; and therefore it doth not bind conscience : indeed it bindeth us in conscience to repent of it.

4. Such as though they be lawfull and profitable and in our own freedome, yet if there fall a greater consequence before the time of performance, we are not bound in conscience to perform them : as if a man upon the receipt of some mercie should in testimonie of his thankfulness vow a hundred pounds to good uses, in the mean time his estate so decayeth as that he shall undo himself and his familie if he perform it ; this is so great a consequence, and contingently hapned, that it freeth his conscience from performing what he had vowed : Or if a man should promise marriage to a woman, and before the time of nuptials she be found unchast ; this is a farre greater consequence, and he is not bound in conscience to marry her. These kinds of vows do not bind in conscience : But all other do bind us.

1. Use ; We may learn from hence never to vow but with good judgement and counsel. For either we must keep our promise, or not : If we must, that is a signe it is good, and therefore had need of deliberation : If we must not keep it then it is a signe of rashnesse and inconsideratenesse

nesse; and besides it may prove scandalous and offensive to them to whom we make it, and also to them that shall heare of it: And therefore it requireth good judgement and advise to vow. What a rash vow was that of good Jephthah?

Judges 11.
30.

If thou wilt deliver Ammon into my hand, whatsoever meeteth me I will offer it for a burnt-offering. How if a dog had first met him? what a sinne had it been? How if his daughter? what a thing had that been? And indeed it proved to be his daughter. Vows without judgement do but increase our sinnes and aggravate our transgressions against God.

2. *Use*; This teacheth us to keep our good vows whatsoever they be that we make. Indeed it is hard to keep a good, yea it is hard to make a good vow in that manner as we should: It requireth a great deal of faith and self-deniall and humilitie and strength of resolution: But when we have made it, our sinne is the greater

Eccles. 5. 5. if we do not then keep it; *Better it is not to vow then that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Hast thou vowed a vow? then deferre not to pay it: God hath no pleasure in fools.* As if the holy Ghost had said, *It is the part of a fool to vow before he consider and be absolutely resolved to perform, to be off and on with the Lord God of hosts: The Lord hath no pleasure in fools: Therefore pay all thy good vows, and be humbled for thy rash vows.* But we are fallen into bad times, when truth and equitie is perished from among men: Every one is a deceitfull bow; yea, the best (almost) is a briar: Nothing so common as vows and promises; but
few

few make conscience of performing them. Nay, men are carelesse of their grand vow which they have made vnto God in their baptisme. O this is a very fearfull sinne! Ye have all made a vow unto God in your baptisme that ye would live otherwise then ye do, and ye make no conscience to keep it. Baptisme is a very weightie thing: If there were no other thing to bind you to holinesse and obedience and faith but onely the vow ye entred into in your baptisme, did ye consider what a vow it is, it would move you alone. It is said of Apollos that he was *feruent in spirit* Acts 18. though he *knew nothing but the baptisme* of 25. John: Apollos considered what a vow he had made unto God in his baptisme, that, though he knew nothing else, it made him zealous for God. Baptisme is a very great binder of conscience: It bindeth a man to believe, and to go out of himself, and to submit to Jesus Christ. The wicked Pharisees saw this to be true: *If we shall say that Johns baptisme was from heaven, he will say, Why did ye not then believe?* Math. 21. Beloved, was not your baptisme from heaven? was it not an ordinance of God? and did ye not solemnly then vow unto God? Why then do ye not believe? why do ye not denie yourselves, your works, your wayes, and take up Christs crosse? As Christ saith of John Baptist, *Among them that are born of women there hath not been a greater then John the Baptist;* Math. 11. 11. so may I say of bonds and of vows and covenants. Among all the vows and covenants that ever were made there hath not been a greater then this of Baptisme: And therefore ye had best look to the performing of

what ye then vowed : If ye do not, ye are grievous breakers of covenant with God ; which sinne will surely stand against you for evil. It is most certain, that Baptisme doth greatly bind us in conscience to walk answerably to it in all righteousness and true holiness : And we can never be saved (though we are baptized) except we can answer with a good conscience that we live as we vowed in our Baptisme : 1. Pet. 3. 21. *The like figure whereunto, even Baptisme, doth also now save us ; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.* Mark ; Unless we can answer with a good conscience that we live according to our promises in it, our Baptisme cannot save us. I pray, consider that speech of St Paul ;

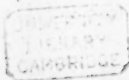
Rom. 6. 4. *We are buried with Christ by Baptisme into his death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newnesse of life.* Mark ; There is the vow that we made unto God in our Baptisme : And the Apostle there telleth us we are bound in conscience to keep this vow ; otherwise we had better have been without our Baptisme. Do not think that God will be mocked : Ye are content to go for Christians : but if ye be Christians, consider ye are under a great vow ; and if ye do not keep it, Gods covenant hath a quarrel against you, and ye shall be broken in judgement. There is no sinne that ye live in, no lust that your conscience telleth you hath entertainment in your hearts, but it is sacramentall perjurie against the vow that ye made unto God in your Baptisme. Are ye dead to good duties ? Ye vowed in your

Baptisme

Baptisme ye would not be so. Do ye not dayly mortifie and subdue your affections? Ye vowed in your Baptisme ye would. Do ye not dayly fight against sinne and the flesh, like the faithfull souldiers of Christ? Ye vowed in your Baptisme ye would. What a horrible perjurie is this? Nay, it is worse: it is a sacramentall perjurie. When the Apostles saw any sinne in the people, presently they tell them of Baptisme: as if they should say, *Do ye live thus and thus, when ye vowed the contrarie in your Baptisme?* When there were divisions in Corinth; Some would be of Cephas, and some of Apollos, and some of Paul: Paul then telleth them of their Baptisme; *Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* As if he 1. Cor. 1. 13. had said, *I pray, consider how contrary this is unto your Baptisme: Ye were baptized into Christ; and are ye thus divided among your selves?* So when there was corruption crept into the people of Galatia, St Paul telleth them of their Baptisme: *As many of you, saith he, as have* Gal. 3. 27. *been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* As if he had said, *This corruption of yours is contrarie to your Baptisme: Ye were baptized into Christ, and ye have vowed to put on Christ; and do ye yield to such corruptions as these?* So also when there was want of love and unitie and affection between one another among the Ephesians, St Paul telleth them of their Baptisme: O saith he, *There is one God, one faith, one ba-* Ephes. 4. 5. *ptisme.* As if he should say, *This is contrarie to your baptism: Ye were all baptized with one baptism; and do not ye live in peace? and is there not unitie of spirit one with another among*

you? What? and were all baptized with one baptism? Beloved, ye never do that which is not good but ye go clean contrarie to your Baptisme. What? were ye baptized into Christ, and do thus? baptized into Christ and pray thus? baptized into Christ, and heare the word of Christ thus? serve God no better then thus? Your Baptisme bindeth you in conscience against every sinne and every evil way: O let us take it to heart and consider it.

FINIS.



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